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TRB

from Washington
April 26, 1975

Great Blunders

All the way back in the plane to Washington that night I pored over the Sunday papers, mostly British. One of those sudden journalistic trips whisked me to France to watch the American experience from abroad. Then Sunday morning before returning I went to a soul-lifting service at Notre Dame, Paris, and came out to find six Vietnamese, with yellow posters, at the front asking alms—"Secours Vietnam." They are doing it today all over Europe. A gray, grated police van chivied them away; *oui*, they had a permit, but it was not appropriate before the great church.

Behind, on the Seine, is the most tragic park in the world, the Park of the Deportation. You walk down a steep, narrow flight of cement stairs open to the sky to where the Seine rolls past and through a prison-like grating, look into a long, dimly lit cell that goes almost out of sight, lined from floor to roof with stamp-sized name plates. In the silent enclosure, in a kind of cuneiform script are names: Auschwitz, Dachau, Buchenwald. The inscription reads, "1940—Aux Deux Cent Mille [200,000] Morts Dans Les Camps." They were taken out of Paris like cattle, to clean, efficient, methodical gas chambers.

To my surprise I found myself suddenly crying and grinding my teeth. First the heart-raising choir in the ancient cathedral telling of what man might be and then, suddenly this, telling what man is. I hated the maniac Hitler crew; I could never forgive the Germans. But other nations have lost their senses too; was this not the land of the guillotine? And then, of course, I thought of Vietnam.

It was not wickedness; it was stupidity. Five years ago, April 30, 1970, an American President on television told the nation that, even as he spoke, US troops were driving into "the key control center" of Cambodia in an incursion—"the headquarters for the entire Communist military operation in South Vietnam." The tone was apocalyptic: "I shall meet my responsibility as commander-in-chief of our armed forces to take the action I consider necessary." If we failed to act, he said, "credibility of the United States would be destroyed in every area of the world where only the power of the United States deters aggression." It was a world of menace, he told the doubtful nation, citing student antiwar protest: "Even here in the United States great universities are being systematically destroyed." Yes, he said, if when the chips are down and the "world's most powerful nation . . . acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world." He would not, he added, "see this nation accept the first defeat in its proud 190-year history."

So of course more protests followed; four Kent State University students were shot; dissension soared. But once more reporting to the nation a month later the President called the incursion "the most successful operation of the long and difficult war." History, he said, would bear him out.

And Cambodia now? It would be dramatic if one of the networks repeated the Nixon speech on its fifth anniversary next week.

European newspapers treat the Vietnam debacle coolly; front pages tell the story; inside analyze America's reaction. They cannot quite make the latter out. (They never can quite make out America's quaint 18th-century government that pits White House against Congress.) Like Nixon five years ago, Ford and Kissinger and now Rockefeller are trying to shock us again with alarm over what foreigners will think. It is called "linkage." An AP story quotes the Vice President on his flight to Taipei saying that "the rest of the world, allies and adversaries alike, are watching the US because of the tragedy in Indochina. Tragically it has weakened their confidence and reliance on the United States."

But Europeans have seen wars lost before; it is what the US does now that they watch and weigh. Russia so far seems relatively mild. It is Ford and Kissinger who provoke bitterness by implying that but for the refusal of Congress to grant more aid 55,000 lives and untold treasure would not have been lost in vain. Europeans wonder at the President; at least I find the London *Sunday Times*, a pillar of the establishment, commenting that "his personal response to the rout has revealed a politician and a man of depressing inadequacy."

Former German Chancellor Willy Brandt came to Washington recently almost expressly, it seemed, to say that there had been no reduction of "the credit of the US among West Europeans." They have not lost confidence in us; have we lost confidence in ourselves?

Many fear isolationism. But does a driver who has had a crack-up give up driving, or simply drive more carefully? The real 1918 isolationists, Borah, Smoot, Lodge, Hiram Johnson, kept the US out of the League of Nations because they hated Wilson, a broken President. But today most congressmen genuinely like President Ford. Here again take the evidence of an old Washington hand—I am surprised that the bitterness is so diluted. Fate picked Ford to speak the epilogue of one of the greatest blunders of our history. There is a good deal of sympathy for him.

The speed of air travel made it possible for me to watch Dr. Kissinger make his appeal for more funds before the Appropriations Committee. In a low, mellow voice with a dramatic rise and fall, he showed brilliant adeptness in answering questioners. He didn't raise hackles. But alas, his credibility is more and more in doubt. Washington in the latest incident uncomfortably moves to the opinion that, despite denials, he gave President Thieu tacit assurances of support to persuade him to sign the January 1973 peace agreement.

"Probably the only people who have the historical sense of inevitable victory are Americans," said the late Denis Brogan. That was before Vietnam. America never lost a war, we said. That was before Vietnam. Our mission is universal, we said. Before Vietnam. Given a chance, we believed, any nation would spring to accept our goals and ideals. Before Vietnam. In short watching the long tragedy in living color has been a chastening experience but the act of bravery is to face up to it. I see no loss of nerve in Washington; only a great sadness and maybe the dawn of a new maturity—a coming of age.

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Renewing the Clemency Promise

When Jerry Ford replaced Richard Nixon as President, one of his first official acts was to offer draft evaders and military deserters a form of forgiveness he called "clemency." Given the rigidity of his views on Vietnam as a congressman the offer seemed generous. (It seemed less so after he gave Richard Nixon a full pardon for his crimes.) To men imprisoned for deserting or evading the draft, Ford promised a special channel of appeal, and if the new executive clemency board decided in their favor, he planned to let them out. Evaders not caught by the authorities were told they could clear their record by working for two years in menial or public service jobs assigned by the government. There were no cheers when Ford broached this plan at a convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars last August. Nor were antiwar leaders enthusiastic. Spokesmen for exiles in Canada were particularly contemptuous of a plan that required war resisters to submit to a process of "earned reentry." If anyone deserved to do penance, they argued, it was the officials who ran the war.

Despite the fact that Ford's clemency plan was attacked from all sides, it actually did some good. The statistics show that it was a flop in terms of the number who might have been helped, but weren't. But for those who used it, the clemency appeal was valuable. By the government's estimate 125,000 were eligible for clemency; about 20,000 took advantage of it. Perhaps the greatest operative flaw in the program was its deadline. For no clear reason the President decided that applications for clemency wouldn't be accepted after January 31 this year. Ford postponed the deadline twice, then stopped at March 31. Now that final deadline has passed, and Ford doesn't want to extend his generosity any further, even though the head of the clemency board, former Republican Sen. Charles Goodell, said it ought to continue at least until the end of June. Already the clemency office has received 200 applications it can't consider.

The President needs a push from Congress. Two bills are now being considered that would renew the promise of leniency he made last year. The more generous of the two, sponsored by Sens. Philip Hart and Gaylord Nelson, would grant unconditional amnesty to evaders and deserters. The other, sponsored by Sens. Nelson and Jacob Javits, is more likely to succeed. It would simply extend the original program

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and make a few modest changes. All deadlines would be eliminated, exiles would be given 30-day nonimmigrant passes each year to visit home, and applicants who do not like the terms of the program would be free to leave the country without hindrance. If the President was sincere about his promise, he will not block this legislation.

Michigan's New Poison

As the carcasses of dead farm animals continue to pile up on western Michigan farms, people are beginning to ask whether authorities are taking adequate steps to safeguard public health. The deaths of thousands of Michigan farm animals and the deformation or stillborn births of countless others are being attributed to the effects of polybrominated biphenyl (PBB), a chemical flame retardant introduced inadvertently 20 months ago into the state's animal feed supply. The Michigan Department of Agriculture now believes that some time in June 1973, 762 pounds of PBB was mistaken for a dairy cow feed additive, magnesium oxide, and shipped from the Michigan Chemical Corp. in St. Louis, Michigan to outlets of Farm Bureau Services, a statewide feed cooperative, where it was mixed with animal feed and distributed to farmers throughout the state. What worries Michigan residents and others who use Michigan food products is the fact that animals with the symptoms of PBB poisoning—black sores, swollen joints, weakened resistance and hair loss—are dying with very low concentrations of PBB in their fat while other, seemingly healthy animals with identical or higher levels of PBB are deemed by the state to be safe for human consumption.

Poisoning by PBB has produced an inexplicable but frightening pattern of symptoms in animals that seems to bear little relation to the level of contamination in the animals' systems. Many of the dead and dying farm animals had extremely high concentrations of PBB in their systems, reaching in some cases as much as 500 parts per million. Other animals, however, are dying with less than .3 parts per million of PBB in their systems and, in some cases, as little as .06 parts per million. Yet state authorities continue to approve animals with contamination levels of less than .3 parts per million as fit for human consumption.

The fact that animals are dying and giving birth to grotesquely deformed young with concentrations of PBB below the level in meat approved for sale in supermarkets has given rise to demands that PBB-tainted products be completely eliminated from Michigan food counters. At a meeting this March in Rockford, a small farming community north of Grand Rapids, a group calling itself Concerned American People got together to begin putting pressure on state authorities to reduce the acceptable level of PBB in food products to zero. Because PBB contamination is now extremely widespread, however, eliminating it from the state's food supply will be a major undertaking.

The problems in eliminating PBB derive from the fact that Michigan livestock fed on it for many months before its effects were noted or its presence identified. The upsurge in unexplained animal deaths and mutations was not connected to the mix-up involving PBB until July 1974. By that time, however, due to the recycling of animal carcasses and secondary contamination of large quantities of animal feed, PBB had been consumed in at least small amounts by almost all the state's farm animals.

The state department of agriculture began in July to quarantine herds and destroy animals that showed more than one part per million of PBB in their fat tissue. The acceptable level of PBB was revised downward in November to .3 parts per million, significantly increasing the number of animals that had to be killed. In all, the state has now destroyed 11,000 cattle, 1900 hogs and 1.5 million chickens. State authorities, however, believe that the animals already destroyed represent only a small percentage of the vast number of animals that would have to be killed if it were decided to reduce the allowable level of PBB in Michigan livestock and animal products to zero. State Sen. John Otterbacker, chairman of the Senate Health, Social Services and Retirement Committee, has said this decision could require the destruction of every farm animal in the state.

Dr. Donald Isleib, chief deputy director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture, believes such far-reaching action is not necessary. He said that for better or worse, the bulk of PBB contaminated products has been ingested by Michigan consumers without producing an identifiable pattern of human illness. For this reason he said that he believes the present allowable level of .3 parts per million of PBB is all right. Dr. Isleib said that preliminary results of a study of 165 farmers who ate the contaminated meat and dairy products from their own farms suggest no unusual incidence of illness in the exposed individuals, but he conceded that the short-term effects of PBB poisoning on humans are still undetermined and the long term effects, completely unknown.

The official "safe" level of .3 parts per million approved for human consumption seems arbitrary given the lack of concrete evidence on the effect PBB may have on human health. Dr. Walter Meester, the head of the Western Michigan Poison Control Center and a specialist in toxicology at Blodgett Memorial Hospital, said that the effects might not become known for years and that in light of the large number of animal deaths and birth defects, all PBB-contaminated animals should be removed from the market. At this writing the state does not appear ready to take this action.

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Specializing the Law

Unheralded and largely ignored, a new movement in the legal profession is threatening to raise the costs of lawyers' services and to exclude politically unpopular lawyers from the trial courts. Deceptively called "legal specialization," the movement deals not so much with specialization, long a fact of lawyerly life, but with certification of specialists by the organized bar.

Certification already exists in other professions, notably medicine, and increasingly it has come under attack for speeding the demise of the generalist and the rise of the high-priced expert. The same trend would surely affect lawyers. "Certification of specialists in the legal profession," Chicago attorney Marvin Mindes wrote in the January 1975 American Bar Association *Journal*, would be "considerably more monopolistic than the parallel development in medicine." Those most likely to be hurt are middle-class Americans who already shy away from lawyers because they cannot afford them.

The specialization movement is not new; the American Bar Association has been considering the national regulation of legal specialities since 1954, but never garnered much support. Then in the late 1960s, the ABA gave up its attempts at national regulation and began encouraging individual state programs. Suddenly state bars began flocking to the movement; California and New Mexico have begun programs, and more than 20 others are actively considering them.

Sensing the size of the movement, the ABA has asked for a hiatus on the establishment of new programs until the existing ones are examined. And so specialization as it now exists is labeled an "experiment."

But this "experiment" is already producing major changes. For example certified specialists may advertise themselves—say, in the Yellow Pages—as experts in a given field, such as tax law or workmen's compensation. In the past advertising has been forbidden (except by a few public interest groups) by the legal Code of Professional Responsibility. Promotion, it was thought, might "encourage extravagant, artful, self-laudatory brashness in seeking business and could mislead the layman." Certification programs now underway seem designed to do exactly that. In New Mexico, for example, any lawyer, even one fresh from law school, can list a practice as "limited" or "primarily limited" to a maximum of three areas. Lawyers with five years' experience can announce themselves specialists. While local telephone books carry disclaimers, the chairman of the ABA's specialization committee, Arthur Lewis, has frequently expressed concern about possible abuses of such unregulated programs.

The California bar's requirements are somewhat stricter. To be certified one must have letters of recommendation, pass a written test and spend at least five years and a given percentage of time in a specialty.

Although some think the license to advertise is a significant impetus to the movement, the bar associations seldom mention it. Instead they view specialization as a way of ensuring competence. University of Denver law professor James Wallace, chairman of the Colorado bar's specialization committee, says it will "provide a means for people to select lawyers intelligently" and "upgrade the competence of the bar." But it is difficult to see how specialization will protect consumers from inept attorneys. Under current plans, no attorney will be forced to become certified, nor will his practice of law be restricted if he fails to meet certification standards. Even Prof. Wallace says the New Mexico plan, with its lack of "quality control," is "a fraud on the public."

The organized bar also promises that specialization will bring lower prices. ABA President James Fellers said last year that the movement would eventually increase middle-class access to reasonably priced legal services—a statement on its face at odds with common sense. The annual administrative expenditure for the California plan, covering only three of the more than 100 possible specialties, comes to $150,000 and is borne by all California lawyers. The fees for continuing education courses are often as high as $500, a cost that will certainly be passed on to the consumer. (Not surprisingly, the organizations that give these courses have been strong supporters of the movement.) And given that specialization as practiced in large law firms has traditionally meant higher prices—prices that have always excluded the middle class—Fellers' prediction is even more difficult to comprehend. Even Arthur Lewis of the ABA specialization committee admits that some proponents of specialization may be "trying to help themselves and not the public."

Lurking behind the movement's questionable promises of better and cheaper service is a disturbing possibility rarely mentioned by members of the organized bar—that specialization offers an opportunity to exclude political "undesirables" from practicing in America's trial courts. In 1972 the California Senate considered a bill that, if passed, would have prohibited uncertified lawyers from appearing in capital cases; the certification requirements would have kept most of the country's prominent radical lawyers out of the courts. Los Angeles attorney Barry Litt, an active opponent of the California bill, says radical lawyers "often have a civil or labor practice and are skilled trial lawyers even though they don't spend the bulk of their time on criminal cases." The California bill would also exclude the large number of newly admitted women and blacks, who have not been practicing long enough to meet certification requirements. The issue is bound to arise again when the bar thinks it has enough clout in the legislature to get it passed.

The threat of removing radical lawyers from the trial courts has been posed by none other than Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger, who in 1973

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questioned the quality of many lawyers appearing in "serious" cases. The Chief Justice complained about "overzealous advocates" who "disrupt proceedings." Burger continues to lobby for limited access to the bar. Federal Judge Jack B. Weinstein alluded to these threats in a speech to the Society of American Law Teachers last December. "There is an attempt underway to make it more difficult to gain admittance to the federal bar on the grounds that this will improve the quality of representation," the judge said. "This elitist attitude harkens back to the ancient central court system in England, which was designed primarily to protect the well-to-do. . . . I would permit anyone admitted to any state bar to practice in any federal court." But with specialization programs the organized bar could easily override Judge Weinstein's wishes.

All this is not to deny the need for reasonably priced, high quality legal services. But specialization will promote neither of these. If lawyers spend money to become certified, they will, following market rules, raise their prices. If they advertise, the cost will quite likely be passed on to the consumer. Advertising should, in any case, be a separate issue; either it's permissible, or it isn't, and if advertising is to be allowed, it shouldn't be brought in through the back door of specialization. Nor should the question of competence. If a lawyer is incompetent, the bar should take away his license rather than pretend that upgrading specialists will make other lawyers competent.

Experimental programs, once established, have a way of becoming institutions, and it's clear that the rush for specialization is on. So if you discover one of these days that you need three lawyers because of an auto accident that left you with a broken arm while you were on your way to divorce your spouse, you can thank legal specialization. And if you go to court, you may well need a fourth.

Robert Stuart Nathan and Norma Levy

Mr. Nathan is editor of *Juris Doctor* magazine. *Ms. Levy* is a graduate of Yale Law School.

White House Watch

Kissinger and Ford

The Sunday night before President Ford returned to Washington from Palm Springs, with a stopover at Las Vegas to address the National Association of Broadcasters, the White House staff and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's assistants understood that he would bypass Las Vegas and fly straight back to Washington. He didn't. When a line of White House and association officials preceded the President to the speaker's table in Las Vegas, there was Henry, bowing and smiling with evident pleasure and looking as if he were not at all surprised by the standing ovation that he received from the audience. The ovation gave Mr. Ford cause to open an otherwise dreary speech, one that was acknowledged later in Washington to have been "a throwaway," with the following tribute: "Let me personally express my appreciation for the very warm welcome and reception that you have given to our great Secretary of State, a person of unbelievable wisdom and, I think, the finest background and knowledge in the field of foreign policy of anybody in my lifetime and, of course, his indefatigable dedication."

This effusion occurred at a time of gathering crisis in the world—in Vietnam and Cambodia; in the Middle East, where Kissinger had recently failed to bring about the accommodation between Israel and Egypt, as a step toward overall Israeli and Arab accommodation, that he had thought to be within his grasp; and in capitals from the Far East to Europe, where the collapse of American hopes and policy and the ruin of American friends in Indochina were leading governments and leaders to reevaluate the worth of United States promises and leadership. The tribute also occurred just after the President had asked his Secretary of State to remain in office and just before Mr. Ford delivered to Congress the most important and the most carefully prepared statement on foreign policy that he has undertaken since he assumed the presidency. In the preparation of that statement, a call for renewed assistance in Vietnam and for sustained world leadership, Kissinger demonstrated his continued ascendance over all other presidential advisers, domestic and foreign, and both by this means and in private conversation suggested that he really needed no reassurance of his high standing with the President.

But he did. That was what the Las Vegas tribute was all about. The facts that he should have needed it and that the President should have known that he needed it at this time of crumbling and crisis and reassessment constitute a remarkable but not unprecedented chapter in the Kissinger story as it has unfolded since Richard Nixon persuaded him to leave Harvard and Nelson Rockefeller and join the Nixon administration in 1969. H.R. Haldeman, President Nixon's staff chief, told in a CBS television interview how Kissinger threatened to quit soon after he became the President's assistant for national security affairs, in the mistaken notion that Mr. Nixon was about to repudiate his view of Vietnam policy, and how later he "many times" put about the idea that he might leave. The best known of these occasions surfaced on January 16, 1971, when Mr. Nixon in a famous letter thanked Kissinger for resigning from the Harvard faculty in order to stay at the White House and wrote: "Frankly, I cannot imagine what the government would be like without you."

Like Mr. Nixon before him Mr. Ford was recently called upon to imagine what government would be like

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without Kissinger. I came very near writing last January that Kissinger intended to quit next summer or fall, given the sequence of successes that he expected in the Middle East, in the conclusion of the nuclear arms control negotiations that followed the President's visit to Vladivostok, and, finally, a trip to Communist China during which Kissinger would introduce President Ford as he had introduced President Nixon in 1972. As has so often happened in matters concerning Henry Kissinger, I'd have been right in January and wrong in April. Kissinger intended in January precisely what I was told he did and the President soon came to know that he did. There was specific discussion at the White House of whether Kissinger would be an asset or a liability in the 1976 presidential campaign, assuming (as I do, short of certainty) that Mr. Ford stands for election.

All of this changed when the crumbling began. When the at least temporary failure in the Middle East was obvious, and soon after the calculation of Kissinger, the President, and everyone else officially concerned that North Vietnam would withhold a decisive offensive in South Vietnam until 1976 proved to be disastrously in error, anyone who knows Kissinger at all well should have assumed that his own wishes and plans, the President's aside, would change. They did. Henry Kissinger is no man to quit when quitting would appear to be running from failure. It also turned out—one may guess, to Kissinger's immense relief—that the President concluded that he couldn't do without his Secretary of State, who continued to double under Mr. Ford as he had under Mr. Nixon since 1972 as the assistant for national security affairs and chief of the National Security Council staff. On March 24, as has been widely reported, Mr. Ford asked Kissinger to stay. The President told Kissinger that he simply couldn't leave him, Gerald Ford, with all this stuff and trouble on his hands. Kissinger agreed to stay. Press Secretary Ron Nessen said in confirming the reports that Kissinger had been asked and had agreed to stay "through the present term, at least." It wasn't quite that way. The Ford-Kissinger discussion was only in terms of staying on the job, not in terms of staying through the present term or any other specific period, and Kissinger is known to be determined not to stay into another Ford or other presidential term after 1976. Kissinger is also known, however, to assume and to assume that the President assumes that he is expected to remain through the present term. This may seem to be distinction without difference, but it isn't. All that either man is actually obligated to is that Kissinger not quit now or soon.

Press Secretary Nessen played an odd part in a related and accompanying sequence that is both odd and distressing. It's the sort of thing that couldn't and wouldn't occur in a White House as well ordered as the one that is administered for Mr. Ford by his staff chief, Donald Rumsfeld, is supposed to be.

It must be understood that tensions have existed between presidential staffs and NSC staffs since the NSC was created in 1947. They existed under Nixon and they exist under Ford, partly for reasons that have to do only incidentally with personalities. One reason is and always has been that NSC staff members consider themselves creatures apart from the ordinary run of White House hacks. Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler's and now Press Secretary Nessen's discontent with the system of communication between the NSC and press staffs centered upon the assignment of a junior NSC assistant—one of the first was David Young, later caught up in the "plumbers" horror—to keep the press secetary and his staff filled in on foreign policy matters. Ziegler wasn't and Nessen isn't denied access to higher-ups, Kissinger included, and Nessen in the past has boasted of his ready access to both Kissinger and Lieut. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, the President's deputy assistant for national security affairs. But the resentment was there and the access was thriftily used.

At Palm Springs on April 1, a mix of factors—staff tensions, slow news, the insatiable hunger of the competitive wire services for "hard" story leads, and a glaring indiscretion by Nessen—erupted at and after a routine Nessen press briefing into a situation that should have but didn't end as a minor staff flare-up. Near the briefing's end Nessen remarked offhandedly that the President that morning had mentioned among other factors in the Vietnam situation "that there have been, and are, ongoing diplomatic efforts to have a negotiated settlement. . . ." The wire services, Reuters in particular, leaped upon this tidbit and its thin amplification in the same briefing. Kissinger in Washington was said to have ejaculated, "Bullshit!," when he read the Reuters bulletin. He telephoned Scowcroft at the White House and growled, "Does Ron Nessen know something that I don't know?" Scowcroft telephoned Nessen in Palm Springs and asked what the hell was going on. Nessen said that after the President mentioned "ongoing efforts" he, Nessen, telephoned Margaret Vanderhye, the latest NSC assistant assigned to press staff liaison, and asked her what the President was talking about. He understood from her that there were new initiatives. She said later, and Scowcroft believed, that Nessen misunderstood her. But Donald Rumsfeld, Scowcroft and Kissinger, reached in turn by Nessen and exposed by him to his towering rage, approved a formal, written statement by Nessen that "I was misinformed on this subject today by a member of

NEXT WEEK: Reflections on the disasters of Indochina

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the National Security Council staff and as a result you were given some inaccurate information." Rumsfeld seems to have believed that Nessen really was misinformed. Scowcroft and Kissinger gathered at worst that Vanderhye had been less than clear. Nobody in responsibility seems to have told Nessen that his dropping of such information on such a basis at a routine briefing was utterly idiotic, in any case.

It should have ended there, with some discomfort for Margaret Vanderhye and nothing worse. But it didn't. Nessen's subsequent harping on the incident, to me and other reporters, led to a spate of printed and broadcast reports that Kissinger was in disfavor with such Ford assistants as Rumsfeld, Robert Hartmann, John Marsh, and that some assistants had recommended to the President that he disassociate himself from Kissinger and Kissinger-Ford policy at least to the extent of getting himself another assistant for national security affairs. I collected a swatch of denials from people who didn't want their denials attributed to them. Let it be said for Nessen, he never went as far in conversation with me as some of the reports indicated somebody at the White House had gone. One of the more ridiculous consequences was a meeting at which Rumsfeld assembled Nessen, Hartmann and Marsh. They swore to each other that they were not the sources of the stories. I understand that Mr. Ford said flatly that nobody had recommended that he displace Kissinger in his staff capacity.

On Friday afternoon, April 11, Nessen fired assistant press secretary Louis M. Thompson, Jr., a former army press officer who, in my limited experience with him, had been discreet and helpful since he joined the Nessen staff last October. Nessen said privately and on the public record that his only reason for letting Lou Thompson go was that the need for his services had ended. Nessen wrote Henry Kissinger that he had identified the source of the anti-Kissinger stories and had solved the problem by firing the source. Three times in conversation with Nessen, I said I had been told this and invited him to say whether it was true. Three times he said: "I do not discuss my communications with Henry Kissinger." I had to conclude that it was true and that a brutal injustice had been done to a good and loyal White House assistant.

John Osborne

Collecting Souvenirs

Operation Babylift

by Gloria Emerson

Operation babylift became a carnival: tearful, middle-class white women squeezing and kissing dark-eyed children, telling reporters that their new names would be Phyllis and Wendy and David. It is not over yet. A spokesman for AID, the government agency providing military aircraft for the private agencies bringing the children here, said it was an "open-ended operation." The arrival of nearly 2000 children from Vietnam—I won't call them orphans since we now know that some of them did indeed have parents—has aroused some of the emotions felt in 1973 when the American prisoners of war came home at last. Many people, so moved and so grateful, forgot that if the United States had not gone on bombing there would have been no prisoners. This time, only two years later, there is the same self-congratulatory spirit, a feeling of winning something at last, the need to prove to ourselves what decent people we really are. It is almost forgotten during these excited, evangelical scenes at airports that it is this country that made so many Vietnamese into orphans, that destroyed villages ripping families apart, this country that sent young Vietnamese fathers to their deaths. Now we have decided the Vietnamese we will "save" and "love" must be very pliant, very helpless. Of course there have been some ugly revelations: Jane Barton of the American Friends Service Committee, who speaks Vietnamese and worked in Vietnam, claimed some "orphans" told her they certainly did have families. She talked to three children of a South Vietnamese colonel. Others confirmed conversations they had with children who said they had parents in Vietnam.

Suddenly, most conveniently, in the last hours of the

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war as a Communist victory seems certain, the "orphans" have our attention although both Saigon and Washington ignored them for years. When I was a reporter in Vietnam in 1970 and 1971, no one at the United States mission in Saigon had any idea how many homeless children there were. The subject of children abandoned by GI fathers was considered embarrassing. Inquiries were turned aside. Vietnamese officials were equally mute. There were more pressing concerns. Now the welfare of a few thousand children has become a most successful propaganda effort for us to defend and support the diseased government of Nguyen Van Thieu despite the opposition to him in the South. Babies are a nicer story than the 26 million craters we gave South Vietnam, nicer than the 100,000 amputees in that wretched country, more fun to read about than the 14 million acres of defoliated forest and the 800,000 acres that we bulldozed. It does not matter at all that on television a Vietnamese foster mother sobbed bitterly and strained for a last look at the child she had cared for as Vietnamese infants were put on a plane at Tan Son Nhut. There are clearly no attempts being made to find foster parents in Vietnam who could take a child; we do not want to give money for that.

Once more the American press has been duped. They have gushed and gushed over the babylift. Baby holding is the fashionable act to join: Yul Brynner, who has a Vietnamese child of his own now, persuades Hugh Hefner to fly "orphans" from the West Coast to New York in his private playboy plane and the bunnies wash and diaper them. President Ford holds a Vietnamese baby, so does Terence Cardinal Cooke for the television cameras. Bob Hope and Ron Reagan will have to make up for lost time. A man from the Middle West calls the Holt Adoption Service, according to a story from Eugene, Oregon, to say: "I'm a very important person and I've got to have one of those Vietnamese children."

The evacuation of the children, and their arrival here, was big news in the United States while much less attention was paid to the story of a letter written by Deputy Premier Dr. Phan Quang Dan. The letter quoted the words of US Ambassador Graham Martin that "this evacuation will help create a shift in public opinion." The ambassador quite correctly predicted that television, radio and newspaper coverage would be useful politically. Not only have the North Vietnamese and the Provisional Revolutionary Government denounced the airlift of children but neutral antiwar South Vietnamese have called it inhumane propaganda for more US war aid.

Critics have said this sudden national embrace of Vietnamese children shows how guilty we feel. There is also the widespread belief in this country that Vietnamese Communists will kill children at random, and the suspicion that even the nicest Vietnamese do not really love or know how to take care of their offspring.

"We have been flooded with mixed-blood children because of all the reports of killings," Cherie Clark, age 29, said in an AP story from Saigon this month. A representative of Friends of Children of Vietnam (one of the private American social welfare agencies arranging the adoptions), Mrs. Clark did not specify what killings and how she knew of them. On April 9 in Geneva, the matter of the children of GI fathers was put to rest by Pham Van Ba, representative of the PRG. He said they would be treated without "hatred or discrimination"; as others have, he called the airlift "kidnapping on a vast scale." The point has also been raised that bringing children of black Americans to the United States to protect them from Vietnamese reprisals is a little absurd considering the racism in this country. No child can be protected from it all his life.

Many of the couples adopting children have been waiting for as long as two years. They have not acted on impulse. But it is more than clear that the children are filling their needs, as the Vietnamese have been obliged to do for Americans for so very long.

"I just wanted a baby," Linda Teel said in tears. She does not know that Vietnam needs her children and cannot spare any of them except for those who need prolonged medical treatment. Other remarks by American mothers make it all too clear that the children will be expected to play certain roles, fill very deep gaps.

"Do it—adopt a child. It's beautiful," Adell Kolinsky said at the Denver airport when she was given a little Vietnamese girl now named Robyn. "Until recently Ben could never get Friday night off. So we didn't do the usual ritual Sabbath ceremony. Now he's got Fridays off and we are starting to observe it . . . As soon as I can I will begin teaching Robyn how to light the candles and what it is to be a Jewish mother. I think it's time we had a girl in the family."

Gerald Hickey, an anthropologist at Cornell University, who lived in Vietnam for 12 years, calls the sudden airlift "a Graham Martin red herring." He deplores the American impression that if children are left in Vietnam they will starve or lead horrible lives. "Vietnamese love their children," Dr. Hickey said. "Perhaps Americans can give all the goodies and comfort and medical care but they can't give more affection than Vietnamese parents." He also reminds us that because of the huge economic stresses caused by the war, and the disorders of the swollen cities filled with refugees from villages we destroyed, many Vietnamese women temporarily put their children into orphanages until their situation improves. There is also the case of men coming home from war, unable to find their offspring.

Dr. Edith Lord, a psychologist at the University of Miami, and others have questioned the humanitarian motives of the transfer of the children. There was no movement in the United States to rescue Biafran

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children during Nigeria's civil war although daily pictures were seen of starving, dying children. Nor did the tragedy of Bangladesh arouse the same concern. If Americans want to help homeless orphans, Dr. Lord reminds people that "there are plenty in the United States crying for foster homes."

Vietnamese living in the United States have tried to reason that all children in their country must be helped and this can best be done by ending the war. The first step would be to stop sustaining the government of Thieu. "You have been killing us with your kindness for twenty years," Le Anh Tu, a 26-year-old Vietnamese woman living in Philadelphia, says. On a recent local radio talk show, called the "Saturday Night Special," she asked listeners in favor of adoption if they really cared for the welfare of Vietnamese children, if they would be willing to return the children once peace came. The answers were shocked refusals at such an idea.

I have visited orphanages in South Vietnam and found them sad places. So were the hospitals, so were the cemeteries. There were children at the Roman Catholic Go Vap orphanage who were perishing from lack of love. Some sat in their cribs knocking their heads against the bars, or obsessively lifting and dropping one of their limbs. At that time I was in favor of adoption because the Thieu government was more interested in power than in helping these children or other Vietnamese. Now it seems time to pay attention to what one American official, who did not want his name used, said to Malcolm Browne of *The New York Times* in Saigon.

"The Communists have an excellent record in looking after children," he said. "Orphans here under the Communists would probably be better off than under the present Saigon government. The real tragedy is the leaving behind of the adults who may face reprisals or death for having worked with Americans."

But the sight of enchanting baby faces of the Vietnamese arrivals—with their "beautiful eyes" as one American relief worker said—clouds one of the last reports from the city of Nha Trang before it collapsed. The UPI report said: "Some Americans holding shotguns, rifles and submachine guns, kept long-time Vietnamese friends from taking the places they had been promised on helicopters flying from Nha Trang today on the way to refuge in Saigon."

We will never have the happy ending we want. President Ford's chief refugee coordinator, Daniel Parker, the administrator of AID, suggested at a congressional hearing that 3000 to 4000 more Vietnamese children be airlifted to the United States. The confusion is immense. The argument grows a little louder, but not loud enough.

On the day of the crash of the US C-5A transport plane carrying 243 children and 43 accompanying adults, a South Vietnamese army lieutenant spoke his mind. "It is nice to see you Americans taking home souvenirs of our country as you leave—china elephants and orphans," this officer said. "Too bad some of them broke today, but we have plenty more."

Avoiding Bloodshed in Saigon

Hanoi's Design

by Stanley Karnow

Reports filtering out of the areas of South Vietnam occupied by the North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces within the past month, though understandably fuzzy, indicate that the Communists are encountering difficulties in their efforts to cope with the millions of people who have suddenly fallen under their control. This suggests, according to official American specialists who monitor Vietnamese affairs, that the Communists were not only unprepared for their present success but were probably astonished by the speed and totality of the South Vietnamese collapse. Given the administrative problems they currently face in Hue, Tuy Hoa, Danang and the other cities they have captured so far, therefore, the Communists would undoubtedly prefer to move gradually toward a political takeover of Saigon rather than disrupt the capital in a major drive. Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, the foreign minister of the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government, said as much the other day when she stressed that her movement is striving to attain its objectives "if possible by other than military means." For that reason the Communist strategy seems to be, at least at this

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writing, aimed at tightening the noose around Saigon in the hope that South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu's adversaries will overthrow him and seek a settlement that would in effect represent surrender. In my opinion President Ford should have encouraged the South Vietnamese to reach a deal with the Communists as a way of averting the bloody showdown that is bound to occur as Thieu attempts to wage a last-ditch battle. But Mr. Ford's appeal to Congress to deliver additional arms and ammunition to the Saigon regime is likely to prompt the Communists to fight such a battle, and a final confrontation may be more horrendous than the upheavals of recent weeks.

The available evidence emerging from places already in the hands of the Communists makes plain the fact that they are not showing the kind of brutality they displayed in Hue during the Tet offensive of 1968, when they slaughtered several thousand Vietnamese civilians for motives that are still unclear. Now, in contrast, the Communists are focusing primarily on the restoration of law and order and on providing such essentials as food, water, lodgings and electricity, and, both their own propaganda and refugee accounts agree, they are relying on persuasive rather than coercive methods to attract popular sympathies. This no easy matter, since South Vietnam's coastal region is swollen with uprooted people, and the Communists, who are deploying most of their troops in the push toward Saigon, lack the personnel to meet the new challenge. In Danang for example, where only three North Vietnamese battalions and a couple of hundred cadres are grappling with two million displaced persons, the Communists have reportedly divided the city into small district units, taken a census and are supervising elections to local committees that will presumably have the job of governing neighborhoods. In cities like Danang, where the Vietcong apparatus has been weak since its destruction during the Tet offensive of 1968, the Communists are depending on some leftover South Vietnamese officials to handle day-to-day affairs under the guidance of Hanoi cadres. But in the Phu Yen province capital of Tuy Hoa, which has long been a Communist stronghold, Vietcong agents surfaced almost immediately after North Vietnamese soldiers marched into the town. A few South Vietnamese police and army officers are said to have been publicly executed in Tuy Hoa, but the Communists generally appear at this stage to be working to win "hearts and minds." Schools are concentrating on political lessons, special entertainment troupes are performing revolutionary skits, and mobile movie vans are exhibiting films extolling the unity between North and South Vietnam. This phase is transitional, however, for the Communists will eventually get down to the business of restructuring South Vietnamese society, and the changes they impose will certainly appear tough to a country that until now has been disorganized. The slowness with which the Communists are proceeding at the moment, though, reflects both their caution and their surprise at having registered such rapid gains on the ground in South Vietnam.

The Communists took advantage of the period that followed the signing of the Paris agreement in January 1973 to strengthen their forces in the South. They constructed an all-weather road and a pipeline across the 17th parallel, and moved in enough trucks, tanks, ammunition, artillery, missiles and manpower to sustain themselves for a year of heavy fighting or several years of low-level combat. This build-up was partly undertaken in reaction to the huge shipments of equipment that the US had sent to Thieu during 1972 in order to allay his apprehension that the Paris accords would jeopardize his position. It was also calculated to put pressure on Thieu to accommodate to the provisions of the agreement that called for some form of political compromise between the Saigon regime and the Vietcong. And it was designed as well to give the Communists the muscle they might need in the event that they felt compelled to launch a full-blown offensive against the South Vietnamese government. With all their hardware, however, the Communists exercised unusual restraint. Although they possessed long-range artillery, for instance, they refrained from shelling South Vietnam's cities, and they even held back from scoring decisively in such engagements as the battle of Dak Pek last year, when they permitted an encircled Saigon government unit to escape unscathed. This restraint was remarkable considering the fact that they could have responded to the provocative behavior of Thieu, who had largely ignored the Paris agreements from the beginning. Among other gestures he effectively made the implementation of the truce impossible by restricting the movements of the Joint Military Commission, composed of South Vietnamese and Vietcong representatives, whose assignment was to delineate the boundaries separating the sectors held by Saigon from those under the Communists. In addition he initiated forays against the Communist areas, and in January 1974 he ordered his troops to accelerate their attacks in multidivisional thrusts that were so successful that Adm. Thomas Moorer, then chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, estimated in testimony before a congressional committee at the time that Thieu had increased his control from 76 percent to 82 percent of South Vietnam and would extend his presence even further. Moorer said in the same testimony that the policy of the Communists was "to concentrate on political action . . . and not go forward with large-scale military activities."

Communist prudence during that period was dictated to a significant extent by the fear that the US might resume its bombings of North Vietnam if the conflict escalated. The prohibition of that option by Congress notwithstanding, the Communists' fear was fueled by

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Thieu's frequent revelations that President Nixon had pledged to come to his rescue in the event of a North Vietnamese assault, and Hanoi was probably worried too by Mr. Nixon's repeated threat that he would react "vigorously" should the cease-fire break down. Although they had sufficient materiel for a year-long offensive against Saigon, the Communists may have been concerned as well that their allies might not resupply them, since the Russians and Chinese were in no mood to see détente with the US menaced by another round of Vietnam fighting and had, according to official American figures, reduced military aid to Hanoi from $750 million in 1972 to $330 million in 1973. It is worth noting, moreover, that most of the Soviet and Chinese equipment that went to North Vietnam after the Paris agreement consisted of defensive weapons, such as anti-aircraft guns. Communist discretion was surely also motivated by the belief that the Saigon establishment was beset by too many internal economic and political contradictions to endure. This conviction must have been heightened during the summer of 1974, when many conservative South Vietnamese figures, among them prominent Catholic spokesmen, began to denounce the corruption of the Thieu regime and demand its abdication. In this respect Hanoi probably calculated as well that the US, troubled by growing economic woes, would sooner or later cut down its support for Thieu and thereby add to his difficulties. And finally, the Communists had decided at last that priority had to be given to reconstruction and development if North Vietnam's morale was to be raised after two decades of war. Jean Thoraval, the French News Agency correspondent in Hanoi, reported as recently as four months ago that the North Vietnamese were dismantling their large air raid shelters in order to use the bricks for buildings, and, he added, the country "is turning from war to peace with such confidence" that a gigantic mausoleum was being constructed for Ho Chi Minh, whose body had been hidden since his death in 1969 to protect it against US air raids. The same focus was mirrored in a speech delivered in February by Vice Premier Le Thanh Nghi, the senior North Vietnamese economic theorist. Listing Hanoi's tasks in 1974 and 1975, he emphasized the need to "heal the wounds of war" at the top, and, after calling for increased production and improved distribution, finished with a nod to "our duties to the heroic South."

None of this meant, however, that the Communists were standing still. Starting in the spring of last year, they began to nibble away at Thieu's territory, and at a conference held in Binh Dinh province in September they outlined the alternatives that faced them. On the one hand the conference communiqué declared, they could continue to work to tilt the balance of forces in their favor in the expectation that the Saigon regime would be compelled to negotiate a compromise to their advantage. Or, if this strategy failed, they would have to return to a wider conflict. Estimating that a major offensive would not be necessary until 1976, they embarked on their plan to exert pressure on Thieu by attacking the highland province of Phuoc Long as a preliminary to an assault against Banmethuot, which they captured last month. It was the loss of Banmethuot that prompted Thieu to order South Vietnamese troop withdrawals from Pleiku, Kontum and Hue, and that decision and its disastrous execution triggered the debacle that has since led the Saigon regime to the brink of collapse. Nobody, including the Communists, foresaw this outcome.

Although the Communists are closer to Saigon than they have ever been and can probably strangle the capital in the weeks ahead, my own guess is that they would opt for a negotiated end to the war if they could get it. For they want to preserve the notion that they are still loyal to the Paris agreement, and would observe it faithfully if Thieu is ousted. By implementation of the accord, though, the Communists mean that the "third segment" in the tripartite Council of National Reconciliation and Concord called for in the Paris agreement should comprise personalities sympathetic to them. This, in simple terms, signifies a coalition government under the aegis of the Communists, or, in even simpler language, the capitulation of the South Vietnamese regime as it has more or less existed since Ngo Dinh Diem took office with US backing in 1954. During the official debates that took place in Washington as the Thieu regime crumbled, many ranking State Department specialists argued that President Ford ought to have accepted the South Vietnamese defeat and proposed a fresh relationship with Hanoi in the spirit of détente that characterizes US ties with Moscow and Peking. Such an approach, these specialists contended, could have marked the opening of a fresh era for the US in Southeast Asia, and, more urgently, it might have bought the time with which to evacuate the Americans and Vietnamese whose lives may be in danger in Vietnam. But Mr. Ford predictably chose a less imaginative course.

If their conduct in Hue, Danang and the other places they control is any augury of their future style in South Vietnam, the Communists will be busy for some time in restoring order before they begin to reorganize the country. Even so my own view is that they may be less drastic than their rhetoric indicates, since South Vietnam with its regional differences and religious particularities is a tough land to govern. Moreover they cannot massacre every Vietnamese with past American or Saigon regime connections unless they are prepared to liquidate a million people, which would of course be lunacy even from their own viewpoint. But the Vietnamese face extraordinarily hard times ahead, and their only consolation may be that the rigor of life under communism is preferable to a war that has meant death and destruction for so many years.

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New Management Needed

Oil: The Strategic Utility

by Josiah Lee Auspitz

In a November 14, 1974 speech that has become the central document for US oil diplomacy, Henry Kissinger compared the energy crisis to the "economic chaos and political upheaval" that threatened the world in the Truman years. And he called for a creative spirit comparable to that which made possible NATO, the Bretton Woods agreement and the reconstruction of Germany and Japan. The analogy struck most observers as excessive even for Dr. Kissinger, whose public rhetoric has always been Spenglerian. How, an influential columnist asked, can one weigh a rise in gasoline prices on the same scale as the formation of the entire postwar era? Oil, like sugar, now costs more but surely this does not mean the decline of the West.

On this issue, however, Dr. Kissinger's lugubriousness was much closer to the truth than the pundit's good cheer. The low and stable price of oil can be compared to the achievements of the Marshall Plan years because it was in fact one of the most important of those achievements. Its demise threatens the very economic foundations of the postwar world because the oil pricing system has itself been an invisible underpinning of the postwar political economy. As long as the public fails to face this, it cannot understand the conditions of its long period of prosperity or the forces that have set the broad terms of the energy policy over which the President and the Congress will be quibbling for the next few months.

In 1946 when the price of Arabian crude was $1.05 a barrel, it was evident that this cheap new source of fuel would revolutionize the world economy. It had been discovered by American firms in unpopulated desert sands where British geologists doubted anything would be found. It was developed with high technology in ways that contrasted dramatically with the usual pattern of imperial exploitation: its extraction involved no plantations, no coolies, almost no native labor. If one believes, with Algeria's Marxist theoreticians, in a labor theory of value, one must recognize that it was American labor and technology that gave this fuel its worth. Once the initial investment in exploration was made, it cost only pennies a barrel to take the oil out of the ground—and there was enough of it, had it been fully exploited, to drive Texas oil, Venezuelan oil and even Iraqi oil off the market.

The cheapness and abundance of Arabian crude posed a dilemma for the United States: if America accepted a free market for oil, it would put its own industry out of business and depend increasingly on a remote and precarious source of supply. If, on the other hand, the US protected inefficient production at home, it would have higher fuel costs than Europe or Japan and deplete its own resources more rapidly.

In the years 1945-49 a tacit policy emerged from bargaining among the major oil companies, the US and British governments, and the European Cooperation Administration. The price of Arabian crude was propped up at over two dollars a barrel—a level that would subsidize new exploration in the Western hemisphere. The price was then allowed to recede to $1.75 a barrel in 1949, at which level the Western hemisphere would be a net exporter, with Britain a midpoint where Eastern and Western hemisphere oil were equally competitive. With remarkably few fluctuations, a uniform international price was held in the $1.75-$2.25 range through most of the 1950s and 1960s.

This pricing system was managed by a cartel of American, Dutch and British firms with cooperation and regulation from their governments, and military protection from the US and Britain to prevent Soviet reentry into Iran. The United States gave its firms extraordinary tax advantages to assure that the profits from oil would be plowed back into further exploration. The result was that oil became a preponderantly American industry.

The US government and oil industry functioned like an international utility, on the whole a reliable one. The partnership kept prices low and stable; it kept the flow of oil free from Soviet interference; it enabled Europe to follow America into the automotive age. And in the unpopulated Arabian peninsula, it involved no neo-colonial exploitation. On the contrary it almost singlehandedly made possible the flowering of a desert country like Kuwait.

As one might expect of a private utility whose rates had been stable for 20 years, the oil companies wanted an increase in the 1970s. They argued that rising world demand required more exploration and hence higher profit; that a quantum jump in price was again necessary to make the Western hemisphere self-sufficient; and that they had, on the whole, exercised reasonably well a quasi-governmental function that was necessary to a free and vigorous world economy.

Arguments like these became political liabilities,

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however. The role of oil as a strategic utility had been treated as a dirty secret by the publicists of US foreign policy. Only radical assistant professors of sociology liked to talk about it—and only in the most lurid terms. No one bothered to tell the American people that their postwar safety and comfort rested on some very hardheaded decisions about maintaining a stable international price of oil. To reopen this question in the Nixon years proved politically impossible.

Further, in their preoccupation with Vietnam, government planners did not take adequate steps to assume the military responsibilities that the British were relinquishing in the Persian Gulf or to cultivate friendly relations with the army officers who deposed the King of Libya in late 1969 and promptly ordered the Americans out of Wheelus Air Base. Finally the oil-producing countries were becoming more assertive: they had had a generation to educate and hire technocrats and to learn some bargaining tricks of their own, the first of which was the foundation of OPEC in 1960.

The oil companies, hardly philanthropic organizations, saw the writing on the wall. The 25-year harmony of corporate and government interests was coming to an end. The Anglo-American military presence was less reliable, public opinion was dead set against them, the oil producers were getting restive, and the US position on the Arab-Israeli conflict could only work against them. If their position was untenable, they might as well get out comfortably. Hence they did nothing to oppose measures by OPEC to jack up the price of oil to a level that now makes it possible for them to sell their foreign holdings on lucrative terms. And the US Departments of State and Treasury, accustomed to taking cues from oil company officials, responded to the most outrageous moves by the OPEC countries only with admonitions.

From 1970 to 1973 first Libya then the other OPEC countries as a group tested American responses. They set terms for the purchase of Western firms, and then reneged, pushing up the timetables and raising the percentage of the share they demanded. Acting collectively, they doubled the price of oil and promised not to change it again soon. On this too they reneged repeatedly. Their actions provoked only verbal rebukes from the US followed by a quiet adjustment to the new demands almost as if they had been decreed by the Supreme Court. In 1973-74 OPEC, breaking its word with impunity, quadrupled the price of oil: the industrial world is now trying to adjust to this too, revising its entire financial structure to deal with every new OPEC demand. The Algerians who have read both Lenin and oil drilling manuals, doubtless have a slogan for it: "When you hit mush, push."

If oil were a commodity like peanuts or palm oil this might be a minor annoyance. Were it even a strategic commodity like uranium or titanium, it might be tolerable. But oil, as we have seen, does not function as a commodity but as a *strategic utility*. The regularity and predictability of its flow are as essential to an industrial economy as the flow of clean water to the city of Washington. The chief flaw in the world's economy today is that the management of an essential utility—the international oil supply—has been left in irresponsible hands by the inattention of the US government and cold indifference of the oil companies.

In a civilized society there are certain things utilities are not allowed to do. They are not allowed to change rates without notice, to renege on published notice, or to alter rates without hearings and deliberation. More important, they are not allowed to play politics with the service they provide, to discriminate among customers or arbitrarily to deny service. And they are expected to plow their profits back into improving service. This writer once worked as a volunteer in a Third World nation in which the minister of power regularly cut off the electricity of businesses from which he wanted to extract bribes or political favors, gave cut rates to his friends and spent surplus funds on real estate speculation and bodyguards. Similar practices, as the film *Chinatown* should remind us, also occur in some American localities. But here, as in the Third World, when such practices are exposed they are treated as crimes.

It is precisely this kind of economic criminality with which OPEC has run the utility it has taken over from the previous and more responsible private cartel. Whereas the oil companies, for all their faults, kept a stable price and a steady supply, the OPEC countries have changed prices without notice or consultation, repudiated published pledges, played politics with the provision of services and interrupted the oil flow arbitrarily. And they have used their monetary surplus in short-term financial manipulations and arms purchases. Their price rises during the past year have, by the most conservative estimates, accounted for one-third of the US rate of inflation—or precisely that portion for the removal of which we are accepting an eight percent unemployment rate.

After all this we are told that we should not get alarmed, because the king of Saudi Arabia and the shah of Iran do not want to see the Western economy collapse. But there is a big difference between not wanting capitalism to collapse and wanting to see it thrive. When the Western powers decided not to internationalize the Arabian oilfields after the war they assumed that Anglo-American officials and businessmen were competent to be entrusted with the economic health of the West. Does anyone believe OPEC is worthy of this trust?

The past three years have made it clear that however honorable the OPEC finance ministers may be in their private lives, their word on oil policy is worthless. The central reality that the American public has yet to face is the need to replace the informal, regional manage

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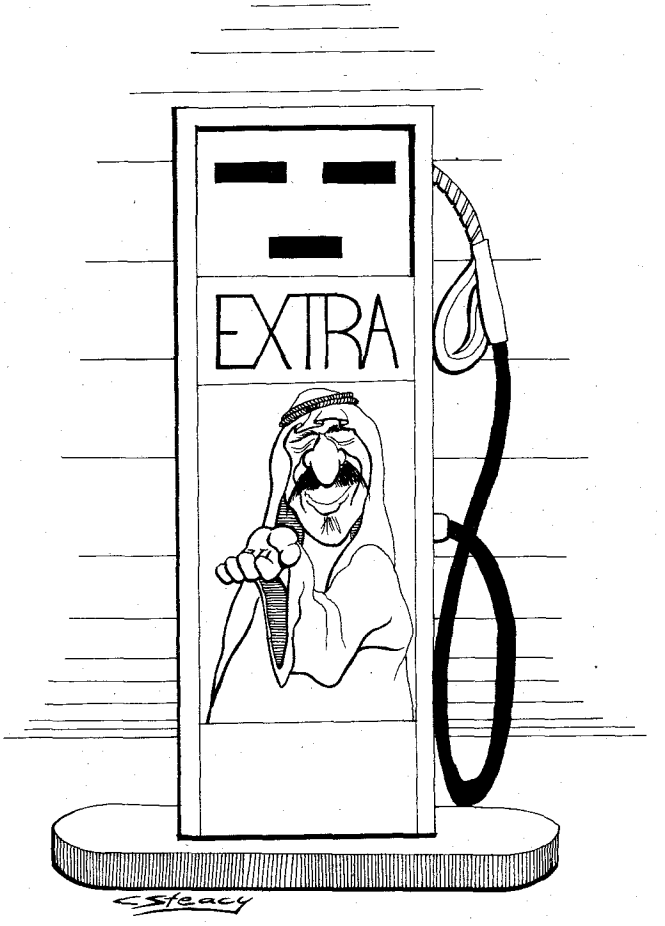
ment of the oil price by OPEC ministers with a formal, truly international system of agreements. OPEC can be part of such a system only if it divests itself of all claims to the unilateral rights to raise or lower prices, to discriminate in pricing either directly or through bilateral deals, to impose embargoes or restrict sales to specific countries. These procedural questions must be settled before bargaining over price begins, for until they are resolved there can be no long-term economic planning anywhere.

Suppose, for example, that OPEC were to cut its price $8.40, and pledge to keep this price for five years. What is to stop OPEC members from changing their minds? And even if they didn't, what is to stop them from cutting the price at the end of the period, thus bankrupting the new high-priced energy industries? Or what is to stop the Saudis, for example, from offering oil at a discriminatory rate of two dollars a barrel to the Japanese in exchange for a joint agreement to monopolize petrochemicals? And how at the end of five years could Western industrial countries expect to have any influence on OPEC's richest members, who by then will have spent billions of dollars, possibly on nuclear armaments, to make themselves immune to military threats? And if we agree to political concessions now to get more oil (for example, permitting Iran to occupy the Arab Emirates, or sacrificing Israel's safety) what is to stop the OPEC countries from extracting new concessions later?

Surplus oil profits present another problem. The Arabian peninsula surplus—by which is meant not all oil revenues but only those that cannot be absorbed in arms purchases or economic development—is conservatively estimated at between $150-$200 billion in constant dollars in the next five years. This represents only a fraction of the world's income, but in economics it is always the discretionary money at the margin that counts. Raymond Vernon of the Harvard business school estimates that US overseas firms have accumulated $200 billion in assets during the postwar period. Thus the Arabian oil producers will have discretionary holdings equivalent to the entire worth of US multinational firms overseas, and since they will garner this wealth in five years rather than 30, the leverage it represents will be far greater than that wielded by US multinationals. The investment of so much money in so short a time will require that the bulk of it be allocated by international money managers, officials of central banks and governments. In the US the big New York banks and the Treasury will do most of the work. This allocation of capital by a central authority can be efficiently used by nations whose economies are dominated by major firms and an efficient central banking system. The Japanese are particularly good at steering money to the most productive giant enterprises. In the United States, however, such quasi-governmental funds are commonly used to strengthen not the most vigorous firms but the weakest—the Penn Central, for example, or Chrysler, Westinghouse, the City of New York and numerous real estate investment trusts. Those entwined in loans to such inefficient entities may be complacent about the petrodollar crisis, but for the country as a whole this attitude only postpones the day of reckoning—a day that two devaluations of the dollar should have warned us is long overdue. The centralized disbursal of petrodollars will have the effect of exaggerating the worst aspects of the two-tier American economy by propping up the weakest entities in the subsidized tier and leaving competitive private enterprise starved for capital.

It has been argued (notably by Hollis Chenery of the World Bank in the January issue of *Foreign Affairs* and by David Rockefeller, president of the Chase Manhattan Bank, in a February lecture at the Harvard business school) that the petrodollar surplus is a blessing in disguise, since it amounts to a form of "forced savings." It is said that, at a time when private markets are not providing adequate capital, the oil price hike, by increasing energy company profits and by putting new surplus funds at the disposal of the banks, will make it possible to finance a new spurt of industrial growth. But the reason we have a capital squeeze today is that the average consumer, at least as he expresses himself in the polls and pressures on Congress, has become cynical about the value of economic growth. While he recognizes that Chrysler needs a high volume of sales to survive, he no longer believes that increased



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productivity benefits him personally. To chortle that this unsatisfactory state of affairs will be remedied by collecting artificial "savings"—and remember that the average consumer must pay for these savings through higher fuel prices—is cynical and dangerous. It makes the entire economy dependent on bonanza oil capital, the benefits of which will not be felt by those who are making the sacrifice. It will further embitter the small man. The corrosive aftereffects will be an increase both in managerial smugness and populist resentment, and a polarization of politics between these two attitudes.

The moral consequences of using "forced savings" also deserve serious attention. Bear in mind that they will be extracted less from American consumers than from the Japanese and West Europeans. If America uses its political leverage, as it shows every sign of doing, not in bargaining over price, but in assuring that petrodollar investments come disproportionately to New York, and that bilateral trade deals are channeled through Washington, we shall in effect be using the "forced savings" of our allies to bolster our own economy. In diplomacy where the effect is often identified with the intent, the US will increasingly appear to be using its military preponderance in the Middle East to extract a form of material tribute from its allies. Moreover as its economy becomes dependent on such unearned capital, there will be less incentive to follow prudent habits of capital formation at home. Already in the past decade the United States has fallen below Britain among major industrial countries devoting the smallest percentage of their output to new capital formation. In the period 1960-73 the percentage of US output invested in capital was exactly half the proportion for Japan, 70 percent of that for Germany and France and 85 percent of that for Italy. Extracting money from these countries by way of petrodollar recycling will rot the moral foundations of our own economy just as forced tribute has done for other empires.

There are those who say cheerfully that Britain thrived for decades on such tricks of finance, and that as long as the OPEC money surplus is held in dollars the United States will benefit from it, much as Britain benefited from Commonwealth balances held in sterling after World War II. Reasoning of this kind seems to underlie Secretary Kissinger's easy assumption in his interview with *Business Week* that the United States will be in a position to "bail out" and "discipline" the economies of Europe. But there is another important fact to bear in mind about Britain's golden age of financial manipulation: she always had America to rescue her. If the US system of capital allocation becomes distorted and top-heavy, if public attitudes toward productivity become cynical, if the US locks itself into an energy system that's more costly than Russia's, who will come to *our* rescue? Will we have to beg the Japanese to "discipline" and "bail out" our effete economy?

There is, needless to say, a coalition of interest groups—representing energy corporations, financiers, arms makers and even opponents of economic growth—that welcomes a permanently high price for oil and views the petrodollar surplus as a benign growth. If this coalition is allowed to gain ascendancy in the next six months it may be politically difficult to unseat it or to lower the price of oil even if a glut of energy develops. In Britain, for example, North Sea developers and London financial brokers, who processed 37 percent of all 1974 petrodollar investments, have been exulting over high oil prices, even as the position of the country deteriorates because of its severe debt to OPEC.

As a practical matter, if the United States does not break the cartel, it will have to join it. Speeches by Henry Kissinger and Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Enders to the International Energy Agency in early February have already proposed a world price floor at the $7.00 to $8.40-a-barrel price thought adequate to make the US self-sufficient in energy by 1985.

There is, indeed, a widespread American notion that a high price is a shrewd way to make the US self-sufficient in energy. This confuses free market and national security arguments. As a matter of national security, it may be important to subsidize inefficient energy sources like oil shale and coal liquefaction. But to use the price mechanism for this national defense aim is like quadrupling hospital costs to give physicians an "incentive" to cure cancer. A high price is an efficient incentive only if it can be maintained over the indefinite future. Moreover there is now great leakage from a high price, since most of the windfall surplus accrues to foreign governments that have no incentive to plow back their earnings into energy supply. The main effect of the high price, then, is to redistribute income from Europe and Japan to the unpopulated Arabian peninsula, to distort capital allocation, and to redistribute income within the US from consumers of energy to producers of old oil and managers of petrodollar investments. Politically, the high price has the effect of a reverse Marshall Plan in which European economic and social stability is sacrificed to pay for American self-sufficiency. The damaging effects of high prices for Europeans and Japanese are not compensated for by the offers to let them "invest" in American energy technology.

The use of the price system to create self-sufficiency is not even intelligent from a point of view that considers protection of national security the first priority. The traditional argument for energy independence dates from World War II, when we could not protect the sea lanes from submarine attack. Even if this concern were still valid in the nuclear age, it would argue for standby oil capacity, not autarky. If an artificially high price makes it profitable for private enterprise to drain US oil reserves first, we decrease our ability to be self-sufficient in an emergency. It is not

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only cheaper but strategically more prudent to consume Arabian reserves at the lowest possible price, while subsidizing directly the early development of technologies in the US that will make it possible to switch to alternative fuel sources later. The current plan to set the price high enough to drain the more remote US oil reserves, and to continue to encourage Sunday drivers to tank up on American gas is the very opposite of sound strategic thinking. The only industrial country that will really benefit from a high price is the Soviet Union, which according to a CIA study now made public, ran a significant hard currency balance of trade surplus in 1974, thanks to a 250 percent increase in oil and related exports. Russia is the world's largest producer of petroleum: a high oil price will make her independent of American economic pressures through 1980, enable her to consolidate her economic hold over the Warsaw bloc nations and perhaps tempt her to use cheap oil and Polish coal to replace Western sources as Germany's main supplies of energy. The Chinese will also be encouraged by the high price to give Japan an alternative to Persian Gulf supplies.

A price-linked program of energy independence also has anomalous effects on our own economy in times of recession. It requires simultaneous programs of economic expansion and oil conservation. Taken together these reinforce a sense of uncertainty among consumers and investors alike. This lack of confidence may be masked temporarily (as it was a year ago) by setting interest rates below the perceived rate of inflation. An appearance of prosperity results as people borrow money to invest in goods, commodities and inventories. But once interest rates move back up, as they inevitably do, the drop in confidence is drastic (as it was six months ago). Professional economists, who analyze such developments in terms of long-term propensities to save, consume and invest, are predictably bewildered when the interaction of foreign and domestic factors creates discontinuities and sudden lurches in economic behavior. Short-term stimulants may fob off the auto industry and other powerful opponents of the high-price strategy, but they do not build long-term confidence in the economy.

A stop-go economy, a weakening strategic position, a reverse Marshall Plan for Europe and Japan, an effective collusion with the cartel, a distortion of capital allocation, an inequitable redistribution of income both internationally and within the United States, a reinforcement of the worst habits of our two-tier industrial system, a rise in populist demagoguery at home, a shift in the locus of real economic authority to unrepresentative and ill-prepared banking institutions, an increasingly unstable level of armaments in the Persian Gulf—these are all undesirable and unintended consequences of the shortsighted view of oil as a commodity rather than as a strategic utility that fuels the entire postwar economic system. Yet because it is a shortsighted view, its effects may well be pleasant enough in the short term: we may see a bustling arms trade, a thriving domestic energy industry, a few golden years for the big banks, an artificial spurt in the economy primed by petrodollar purchases, loans and investments.

During the past 18 months American policy, for all its conflicting signals, appears to have settled on maximizing these favorable effects. Two American Presidents have now given low priority to the pricing and regulation of oil, high priority to attracting OPEC funds; low priority to standby fuel reserves for an emergency, high priority to a price-linked program of self-sufficiency. As if by an invisible hand, the interaction between Presidents and Congress has thus far weeded out initiatives inconsistent with the high price option. While the press has been occupied with Watergate, shuttle diplomacy and Vietnam, America has been moving unobtrusively toward arrangements reminiscent of the 1950s and 1960s when a high price for Arabian crude permitted Western hemisphere self-sufficiency in oil.

Unfortunately this time around the rules of the game have changed. The United States, not the Western hemisphere, is the new locus of self-sufficiency. Britain, once an active partner, is now a passive beneficiary hoping that her North Sea holdings will make her a member of the cartel by 1980. Saudi Arabia and Iran, once little more than puppet regimes, are now able to make significant political demands in any new collusory arrangements. Western Europe and Japan, having prospered under the old arrangements, can look forward to a period when Russia and China offer them the main alternatives to stagnation.

Since there is much in the current drift of American policy that is not attractive to talk about, the prospect of engaging public support for such a program is small among a people used to earning their way in the world. All this suggests an urgent need for a public airing of issues in our oil diplomacy before we take the current arrangements as inalterable, or are tempted to wait for the outbreak of a new Middle Eastern war as a smokescreen for reversing matters. As Dr. Kissinger is doubtless aware, the way in which America has debated the oil problem thus far fits nicely one of Spengler's prophecies: "Parliamentarism . . . is tending rapidly toward taking up itself the role it once assigned to kingship. It is becoming an impressive spectacle for the multitude of the Orthodox, while the center of gravity of big policy . . . is passing de facto . . . to unofficial groups and the will of unofficial personnages . . . And as for America, hitherto lying apart . . . the parallelism of President and Congress . . . has with her entry into world politics become untenable and must . . . make way for formless powers, such as those with which Mexico and South America have long been familiar."

In a future piece Mr. Auspitz will suggest some alternatives to current US oil diplomacy.

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Stanley Kauffmann on films

The Middle of the World
(New Yorker)

Tommy
(Columbia)

Conjecture about the biographical content of a fictional work is not criticism. Here is some non-criticism—a conjecture about Alain Tanner's new film, *The Middle of the World.* (He is the extraordinary Swiss director-writer who made *La Salamandre.*) Tanner knew directly or otherwise of an affair between a married man and a young woman, an affair with so much sexy heartache, so sharp a struggle against inevitable dissolution, that he had to make a film about it. Having written the script, with his previous collaborator the English critic-novelist John Berger, he discovered that it was true enough but trite. So he put in some narrator material at the beginning, middle and end to give the script a size and point it otherwise could not have.

Then (to leave conjecture) he made the picture beautifully. The color photography, by his usual cinematographer Renato Berta, engages us before anything has really started. It has the same clear but soft colors that Nestor Almendros used in Eric Rohmer's films, a palette that somehow bespeaks intelligence and taste. The casting of Philippe Léotard and Olimpia Carlisi is perfect: both have imperfect and attractive faces, both can supply the unspoken. Léotard gives us the modest egotism of a successful thirtyish man, an engineer now arrived at the point of moving upward (running for the Swiss parliament), convinced that it's his due, yet young enough to defy convention for the sake of passion. Carlisi, as a young Italian widow, combines the two requisites: conviction that she is an immigrant worker, now a café waitress in a small Swiss town, and conviction of her introspective quality, a woman who needs to examine her life to make it worth living. And since this picture needs to be sexually convincing as well, I should note that I seconded Léotard's interest in her.

Tanner directs with skill and imagination. In the opening he intercuts two strands: Carlisi's arrival in this town and the meeting of a committee to select Léotard as a candidate. The very intercutting suggests a subsequent meeting of the two, which is not an uncommon device; but every time we return to Carlisi, the camera is traveling slowly to the left, following her as she explores the new place, and every time we return to the committee there is small tight circling around the table. The expansiveness of the first movement contrasted with the constriction of the second tells us that two *qualities* are meeting.

Tanner handles his actors perfectly, never a strained note. He has a good touch with peripheral characters, sifting them neatly around the edges to help certify the center. He edits rigorously, never overstaying our welcome for any sequence. The obvious reference point for the film's mode is Brecht. The unseen narrator, a woman, tells us at the start that the story lasts 112 days. We are given the date of each sequence, beginning in December 1973. Some of the sequences are complex, some are just chunks of living—for instance, after one announcement of the date, we see Carlisi sipping coffee thoughtfully in her room, that's all. As punctuation Tanner uses recurrent shots of a great open field. As they seem to be out of seasonal sync with the rest of the film, I gather they have some symbolic significance. This was lost on me. I also thought that the very first sequence, in which we see a scene of the picture being filmed, was extraneous. The film-as-film idea is not intrinsic to this work.

But *The Middle of the World* is engaging right from the start. The title has at least three meanings. The town is on the continental watershed: on one side streams flow to the Mediterranean, on the other to the north. Second, as the picture makes explicit, the title refers to the woman's vagina, which becomes the center of their world. Third is the relevance of this affair to the centrality of their lives, the watershed effect it has on them.

I can't see that the film's theme is, as some have stated, woman's exploitation by man. Léotard never deceives her and, in fact, offers to change his life in order to live with her. It is she who withdraws, for reasons unspecified. We can speculate that it's because she doesn't want him to change his life for her or because she thinks she will be "no good" for him. But the story has more reality as an affair begun by two mature people who know in advance that it must end, even though both will go through (sincere) motions to keep it from ending. Except by facile reference to a society in which men still have the upper hand, there is no exploitation specifically in this affair.

Then, as we see the woman working in her next job, a factory in Zurich, the narrator tells us that "hopes shatter against lies, opportunism and fear." This has not been demonstrated. It's just a hollow aggrandizing fillip.

I saw this film last September at the New York Film Festival and was disappointed. As I was watching it again lately, I couldn't understand why I had been disappointed—until it was over and I saw again that exceptional talent had been lavished on platitudes, with some paste jewels of *Angst* stuck on fore and aft. Apparently (to guess again) Tanner made the picture because he knew, one way or another, that the story had happened, more or less like this, and it had moved him. But that's not enough. He is a really fine filmmaker whose chief shortcoming is editorial weakness with scripts. When he happens to choose material well, as in *La Salamandre,* the result is excellent. But in *The Middle of the World,* as in *Return from Africa,* he has mistaken too little for enough.

Some filmmakers seem to define themselves by age-groups and periods.

(continued on page 33)

Films Worth Seeing

Amarcord. Fellini's youth, distilled into a bitter, funny, exquisite poem.

A Brief Vacation. Florinda Bolkan strong as a young working woman in De Sica's somewhat mushy account of her awakening.

Donkey Skin. A fairy tale for grown-ups, somewhat pointless but very lovely to watch, including Catherine Deneuve.

Hearts and Minds. Not the definitive Vietnam documentary it ought to have been, especially politically, but with some power.

The Passenger. Far below the best Antonioni, still a suspenseful morality of some effect and much visual beauty.

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SPRING BOOK ISSUE

A Fanatic Heart

The Letters of Sean O'Casey, Volume I (1910-41) edited by David Krause

(Macmillan; $35)

"And oh! dear Sean, don't be too belligerent!" Mrs. Bernard Shaw advised Sean O'Casey in a letter of August 27, 1931. O'Casey refused to accept either the advice or the implication that he needed it. He replied at once:

> *God be my judge that I hate fighting. If I be damned for anything, I shall be damned for keeping the two-edged sword of thought tight in its scabbard when it should be searching the bowels of knaves and fools. I assure you, I shrink from battle, and never advance into a fight unless I am driven into it.*

But he told more of the truth to Harold Macmillan a few years later when he sent him the typescript of *The Flying Wasp:*

> *Everything I have written, up to the present, has been "combative," and the sword I have swung so long is now stuck to my hand, and I can't let go.*

The letters show that the sword spent very little time in its scabbard. O'Casey was the most quarrelsome writer in Ireland, a notoriously quarrelsome country. Joyce, Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory are paragons of patience in that comparison, and Shaw a model of forbearance. Brendan Behan is the only contender. Admittedly O'Casey confined his quarrels to the typewriter.

There is a famous passage in one of Keats' letters, where he says that "though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed in it are fine; the commonest man shows a grace in his quarrel." I see what he means, though I am not convinced, unless we are to distinguish between the energies displayed and the brawling lout who displays them. Reading O'Casey's letters and rehearsing their quarrels, we have to hold simultaneously in our minds the sense in which his energy is fine and the sense in which its occasions are pathetic. It is appalling to see O'Casey denouncing anonymous reviewers, correcting errors in the *Sheffield Independent*, setting the record straight in some wretched school magazine. Many of his letters to newspapers were not published, not because they were dangerous but because they were tedious, exorbitant essays in spleen. He could not bear the popularity of his contemporaries; Charles Morgan one day, Noel Coward the next. He was disgusted by the success of *Love on the Dole*. Though an avowed proletarian, he cultivated the bourgeois vice, envy.

It is true that the world annoyed him, his later plays were not welcomed, he was never paid enough, he was insulted in Dublin, Limerick, Boston. But his real troubles came from within. He lived to the brittle old age of 84, but his career as an important dramatist came and went within five years. A man who writes *The Shadow of a Gunman* in 1923, *Juno and the Paycock* in 1924, *The Plough and the Stars* in 1926 and *The Silver Tassie* in 1928 should have the luck to continue writing good plays or the prudence to withdraw into dignity and silence. Look what E.M. Forster did when his luck or his energy ran out: the aura that surrounds his

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reputation largely depends upon the purity of his silence. But O'Casey lapsed into bad plays, hysterical essays, hectic reminiscences, blasts against the world, benedictions lavished upon communism, atheism, Welsh nationalism.

The letters enact the quarrels in ferocious detail, beginning with O'Casey's first drawn blood in 1912 when, sacked from his job in the Dublin station of the Great Northern Railway, he replied by publishing six denunciations in *The Irish Worker*. The Dublin tram strike in August 1913 gave him not only an opportunity but a vocation. Thereafter he quarreled with everyone; with Countess Markiewicz for her membership of the Citizen Army, Fergus O'Connor for rejecting his verses, Liam O'Rinn for sentiments on the compulsory teaching of Irish, Oliver Gogarty for a review of *I Knock at the Door*, Malcolm Muggeridge about the Moscow treason trials in 1938, M.J. Dolan for his production of *Man and Superman*, Mrs. Sheehy - Skeffington who attacked *The Plough and the Stars*, Walter Starkie for his part in rejecting *The Silver Tassie*, George Russell for his views on art, Kingsley Martin for refusing to publish a letter in *The New Statesman*, Yeats for failing to appreciate the *Tassie*. Some of these were good causes, only a coward would have kept silent, but on many occasions silence would have been the right answer. What was the point of trading insults with James Agate, especially if you were likely to be defeated by that master of the genre? ("I am too busy to start a row with Mr. O'Casey, I therefore merely refer him to certain laws governing this question of generosity in criticism laid down by Sainte-Beuve; Mr. O'Casey's secretary will doubtless know the passage.") Or the point of attacking unimportant people, like poor Canon Sheppard whom O'Casey pursued beyond the grave? "The commonest man shows a grace in his quarrel." Not necessarily: O'Casey mainly showed a determination to keep himself exacerbated, outraged, violated.

Still the letters make a moving spectacle. The waste of spirit and feeling is terrible, but it is impossible to remain unmoved in the presence of such a victim. It matters little that O'Casey brought much of his suffering upon himself or that he insisted on adding his own contribution to the misery God gave him; bad health, useless eyes, no education, no money, no patience. The sole consolation he retained was eloquence. It was never eloquence of the highest quality. Even in the three major plays there are shoddy moments in which the eloquence betrays itself as the form of energy that does not know when to stop. O'Casey's vice of style was the "nimiety, or too-much-ness" that Coleridge ascribed to German philosophers and nearly everybody ascribes to Irish literature. Too much, too loud: O'Casey played all his tunes *fortissimo*. Shaw was right about his style. In 1919 O'Casey sent him the manuscript of a little book, *Three Shouts on a Hill*, composed of three essays on Irish labor, nationalism and the Irish language. He asked Shaw to write a preface, but Shaw declined: "I like the forword and afterword much better than the shouts, which are prodigiously overwritten." O'Casey accepted the refusal, but he did not take to heart the comment on his style. In an otherwise colorless life he needed the color of his prose, the only Mardi Gras he ever enjoyed. He turned the malice of circumstance into a rhetoric of success, vicariously killing his enemies and promoting his friends. Language was a more accommodating home than anything available in Dublin, London or Devon: in that home he was sole master.

Studies of Sean O'Casey by Jack Coughlin

David Krause has done a good job on the letters, presenting them with as much elucidation as any reader is likely to need, but I wish he were a little more judicious in commenting on O'Casey's quarrels. He is always on O'Casey's side, he sees no evil or folly in his hero; everybody is out of step but our Sean. He says that Yeats "disgraced himself and his theatre" by rejecting *The Silver Tassie*. This is an ancient charge, and it is still nonsense. Yeats made a critical error in rejecting the play, but the published correspondence shows that he was scrupulously honorable in reaching his decision. It was absurd of O'Casey to say that Yeats and Lennox Robinson had decided to reject the play before they had even received it. And it was ludicrous to think that the situation was properly met by mailing insults to Yeats: "You seem, Mr. Yeats, to be getting beautifully worse, you astonish me more and more, there seem to be shallows in you of which no one ever dreamed." The strongest argument against Yeats and his colleagues in the Abbey Theater is that *The Silver Tassie*, whatever its faults, was demonstrably superior to many of the plays that the Abbey had already accepted. But Yeats' critique of the play is formidable, and not all foolish or shallow. Robinson and Lady Gregory agreed with him, but O'Casey reserved for Yeats most of his vitriol and rage. Thereafter for several years he could not hear Yeats' name or read his poems without rushing to display the old scar. When Yeats published *The Tower* in 1928, O'Casey read it as a labor of hate, and sent a grotesque account of it to Gogarty. Eventually he forgave Yeats, but he never forgot an injury.

• • •

The first volume brings a painful but touching story to 1941, the second will carry it to 1952, the third to the end, O'Casey's death in 1964. Reading the first volume I found myself recalling Yeats' lines from the poem "Remorse for Intemperate Speech":

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Out of Ireland have we come.
Great hatred, little room
Maimed us at the start.
I carry from my mother's womb
A fanatic heart.

O'Casey brought his Ireland with him, and held on to its rancor wherever he happened to be; London, Devon, New York. He was always the man who was sacked from his first job.

Denis Donoghue

Denis Donoghue, author of *Third Voice* (Princeton University Press) and studies of *Jonathan Swift* and *Yeats*, is professor of modern English and American literature, University College, Dublin.

Reconsideration

The Novels of Margaret Drabble

If the family as a social institution disappears over the next 50 years, Margaret Drabble's novels will become a documentation of its painful survival into the second half of the 20th century. The long and silent lifetime relation of brothers and sisters, the strain of grownup children's relations with aging parents, the fatigue-heightened experience of mothers with infants, the breathing, rib-close love and hatred of husband and wife, they are all there in what has come to be a rather sizable body of work.

But Drabble is not interested in documenting anything. One of the most obvious aspects of her work as a novelist has been her lack of passivity, her reluctance to be shaped by rather than shape the culture in which she lives. With her last novel it has become impossible to ignore what has always been a part of her attraction as a writer: her quest for the good life. Such an old-fashioned undertaking involves her not in turning the clock back but in moving more responsibly into the future. Fortunately she has none of the complacent purposefulness of one who knows where the world should be heading; her novels are full of our contemporary failures and confusions. Her characters drift on the swirling waters of our daily experience, but they do so with a kind of moral evaluation of their own drift.

In *The Millstone*, Rosamund learns through experience that she is not the person she imagines herself to be, a commonplace literary development. But she learns this through a series of choices that are not choices, that permit life to have some say in what happens to her. Drabble takes hold here of one of the most disturbing facts of modern life: we can impose our will upon our experiences more and more and yet are less and less sure of what we will. Rosamund decides to have her illegitimate baby—that is, she does not interpose her will not to have the baby into the situation in which the baby is happening. As a result she finds herself in other situations that involve her in less rational but simultaneously more responsible actions. The most obvious result is that she grows more selfish. She is willing to put up with less self-denial because the baby shares in whatever denial she makes. Instead of being reasonable when she is told she cannot see her baby after an operation in the hospital, she screams her head off and is allowed to see it. The baby introduced a new Rosamund to herself, a person she would never have found if she had not let the baby be born.

Similarly in *The Waterfall*, Jane drifts into a love affair with James, her cousin's husband. She abandons herself to the experience. Jane first appears in a situation that she has sought: her husband has left her and she is about to give birth to a child. We do not know at first how she put herself in this situation. But Drabble has Jane address the reader in the first person in a single sentence before shifting into a third-person narrative: "If I were drowning I couldn't reach out a hand to save myself, so unwilling am I to set myself up against fate." As the narrative continues we learn that the first person *I* takes a very critical view of the account that the third person *she* gives of the love affair. *I* sets itself up as the voice of practical reason opposed to *she*'s soft and supposedly self-indulgent romanticism. The relation between James and Jane is described in terms that juxtapose experience and will. Being so aware of what she is doing when she is "falling in love" how can she fall into it? Isn't she choosing to allow herself to feel this or that emotion? Isn't she making the experience happen rather than experiencing what is happening? Again, Drabble has a character withdraw her supposedly purposeful will and abandon herself to what is happening. But it is a struggle. The *I* keeps breaking through to condemn the *she* for lying, for ignoring her own manipulatory role. The *she* in turn must struggle to stifle self-consciousness and give herself up to the simple experience.

Once again this leads to actions that are simultaneously less rational and more responsible. Having done nothing to stop the affair, Jane does not leave James after an accident in which he almost dies. Reason suggests she should accept the event as signaling the end and phone his wife and go home. At first she is sure he is dead, then she thinks he will certainly die, but as the weeks go by he recovers. Life returns him to her. During the time of his prolonged coma, she remains at a local hotel near the hospital and keeps a vigil. She has one moment of real disloyalty when the *she* who has always defended the love between her and James goes over to the other side and almost persuades Jane that she has merely blown up a rather sordid little sexual encounter into a love story. Drabble presents two ways of looking at the relation between Jane and James: one is that it is treacherous and conniving, that Jane lured James into her bed, that she was not at the end of her tether when she cut herself off from everyone else and lay down to have her child; the other is that she would have gone mad or returned to the wickedly destructive relation with her husband if James had not miraculously walked into her life. Although both sides are given their say, the emotional weight of the novel is on the side of the love. At the end of the novel the *I* has taken up the position of the *she*. Her case rests on the one truth she has never been able to deny no matter how hardheadedly she reviews the facts: "What I deserved was what I had made: solitude, or a repetition of pain. What I received was grace."

As in her latest novel, *The Needle's Eye*, there is the suggestion that too much imposition of will upon the shape of life

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is a chief cause of the feeling that life is frivolous and pointless. When each experience is viewed as chosen and yet all the experiences taken together seem purposeless, then the individual is left with a sense of unfruitful effort, of having tried and failed to make life meaningful. If instead one starts from the given experience, accepting it as having some inner, not-yet-known pattern for significant development, then the process of living out the implications of the experience will be meaningful. The novel ends with Jane's comment concerning the clot in her leg that forms from the birth control pills she has been taking: "I am glad I cannot swallow pills with immunity. I prefer to suffer, I think."

There is something slightly mystical in this attitude, life having some design that one dare not, in Drabble's terms, "countermand by effort." And yet is this anything more than taking seriously the hackneyed notion that life teaches us something? It echoes Roethke's line "I learn by going where I have to go." In her first novel, *A Summer Bird-Cage*, Drabble gives us Sarah, a young girl who is anxious about love and marriage and wants to know what it holds in store for her. She looks at her sister's marriage and is appalled by the suspicion that the sister married for money. On the other hand she sees a perfect love match break up and is equally appalled. Her spinster cousin Daphne's life and character do not recommend themselves to her either. The novel ends with Sarah's fiancé on his way home; they will probably marry; but Sarah knows almost nothing about what the marriage will make of her. Having spent the summer wondering about others' experiences, she is now "waiting to take my life up again, not indeed where I left off, for I shall only find where it is when I try. But somewhere, and somewhere further on, moreover."

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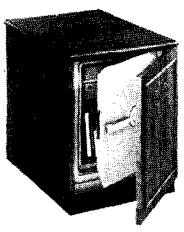

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Her second novel, *The Garrick Year*, begins retrospectively. Seeing an actress on television, Emma remembers the year in which her husband David's career took them to Hereford. The year started with their marriage looking as though it was ready to come apart. Her adulterous affair should have been the finishing touch. But it wasn't. Instead she and David quite literally pick up the pieces and go on. Why? It's hard to say, and yet the answer relates to the whole pace of the novel that toward the end has a kind of hilarity. After the revelation of David's as well as Emma's adultery, the novel becomes very lively. This shift occurs after their daughter Flora's dunking in the river Wye; it continues with Emma's near collapse as she is unable to cope with a broken milk bottle; it culminates in her near fatal accident when a car is backed into her. In the face of all these horrors, Drabble supplies a good-humored acceptance, tolerance, and sanity that suggests that David and Emma are possibly over the worst moments of their marriage. Assailed by life at every turn, they do not need to initiate any of the new experiences that ending their marriage would entail. They have quite enough of life's "uninflated truth" as is!

Drabble is one of those writers who believe we do not make life, and yet human beings have a responsibility for what they do. Rose, in *The Needle's Eye*, is living in a run-down section of London in a rather frumpy house, alone with her three young children, having divorced her husband Christopher. She refuses to move or to send her children to "good" schools or to make a new life for herself and the children. Over the years a life has spun itself around them and now she is supporting that life as best she can. It is ordinary; at the same time it is a contented, an almost fulfilling life in which everything—cooking, cleaning, watching television—is done with love. In Simon, the lawyer who becomes interested in her case because Christopher is seeking custody of the children, Drabble describes someone who is the antithesis of Rose. He lives completely on will. All his actions go against his nature; for he has found that in order to live a decent life, he must stifle all spontaneity. Rose acts against her nature only once: she gives up her way of life not because she wants to but because she must. She takes Christopher back because she cannot morally keep the children away from him. She accepts the need to do this not because she created the situation; she did not. Once the situation has been allowed to exist, she must act responsibly within it.

Taking responsibility for the life one has drifted into does not always mean doing the right thing. Indeed *The Needle's Eye* is unlike any of Drabble's other novels just because Rose does. She decides it is not enough to know the right thing to do. One must do it. No matter how irrational, how mad it may seem—for example, giving away one's millions to an African country—one must do it. At the end of the *The Millstone*, Rosamund can not perform such an act; she lets George go rather than behave in an uncivilized way by throwing herself at his feet. She tells George that it is her nature to worry: "There's nothing I can do about my nature, is there?" He responds with his hand upon the doorknob, "No, nothing." This thoroughly negative conclusion is a failure for Rosamund.

But Rose is a kind of saint, a saint who yells at her children and fights with her husband, but who from childhood has asked with Bunyan's pilgrim: "What is it I must do to be saved?" She has given away her inherited wealth and fought her way back from a privileged position to that of the ordinary mortal. And what is most important about her is her support of the normally vulgar world. At the end, Rose pats the ugly broken lion outside the sports arena and thinks of the beautiful handmade lion in front of her father's estate. She lays her hand approvingly on the ugly lion. "It was gritty and cold, a beast of the people. Mass-produced it had been, but it had weathered into identity. And this she hoped, for every living soul."

That concluding prayer-like line has a generosity that is to be found in almost every line of Drabble's recent biography of Arnold Bennett. Although much of the detailed recounting of his literary life is uninspired, she praises his love of and respect for the ordinary. In an earlier book on Wordsworth she had also drawn the reader's attention to the moral as well as psychological implications of a writer's response to vulgar reality. Discussing his poem about the idiot boy and the leech gatherer, she quotes Wordsworth's own words from a letter about the idiot boy:

> *I have, indeed, often looked upon the conduct of fathers and mothers of the lower classes of society towards idiots as the great triumph of the human heart. It is there that we see the strength, disinterestedness and gran-*

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deur of love; nor have I ever been able to contemplate an object that calls out so many excellent and virtuous sentiments without finding it hallowed thereby, and having something in me which bears down before it, like a deluge, every false sensation of disgust and aversion.

She comments: "Wordsworth, reasonable and practical as ever, does not deny that disgust and aversion are a *possible* reaction; what he does say, quite bluntly and firmly, is that they are wrong." Not for a minute does she ignore the emotional poverty, the meanness, the depressing bleakness of provincial life, and yet she finds Bennett's loyalty to this world commendable. As Rose says, "It's sad not to like the place where you were born." However, as Simon replies, "Many do."

Jerusalem the Golden, the novel Drabble cites as being as much an homage to Bennett as the biography is, gives special emphasis to Rose's line. The young heroine, Clara, loathes and fears her provincial birthplace and finds in the London world the realization of her dreams. The novel captures the great hunger of youth, the insatiable open-mouthed "I want, I want, I want." It also describes the numbness the young feel for long periods when they fear that life has nothing to answer that hunger. In *The Needle's Eye* we see Simon, a man from a similar background who also made it on sheer will. But here Drabble has the survivor (who is no longer as young as Clara and whose modern affluent London is not the new Jerusalem) raise questions about the yearnings left unsatisfied. This is not the first time Drabble has drawn attention to the yearning for physical or emotional closeness, but it is one of her most prolonged treatments of the theme.

Obviously, then, Drabble sees her characters as fated to live in this time and place. As her latest novel attests, she believes that human beings can evolve in ways that will "stump the experts." Her novels celebrate moral awareness; her characters attempt to make out of the rhythm of experience a meaningful life.

J. O'Brien Schaefer

J. O'Brien Schaefer teaches at the University of Pittsburgh. *Note:* The novels of Margaret Drabble include *Waterfall* and *The Needle's Eye* (Knopf), *Jerusalem the Golden, The Garrick Year* and *A Summer Bird-Cage* (Belmont-Tower), and *The Millstone* (out of print).

Letter from London

Frank Kermode

"Weimar" is not exactly on everybody's lips, though the vague resemblance has struck many people. Now approaching the heart of the economic typhoon in whose margins we have tossed since the war, we are more and more ready to say that the situation is desperate but not serious. Since there will be much in this first London report about play-acting, it is not inappropriate to begin it by noting the aplomb with which we are all going on with our performances despite authoritative assurances that the theater is about to fall down. The Prime Minister and his dissident cabinet seem at least to be agreed on one point: that the charade of Common Market renegotiation and referendum is the most important political issue not only of this but of any other time, dwarfing Magna Carta, the execution of Charles I and the loss of the American colonies. Occasionally they notice, with mild expressions of disapproval, that wage-inflation is virtually uncontrolled, and that price increases are moving easily toward a level (say, 30 percent p.a.) far beyond what, a couple of years ago, was regarded as catastrophic and irremediable.

A few days in London would convince anybody that the evidence of doom is hard and real. This week London Transport fares were raised by an official 38 percent, though where it touches me it is more like 50 percent. Hotels, books and clothes are now as dear as they are in New York; in fact it pays the English to buy their shirts at Bloomingdale's and their records at Sam Goody's. Postal charges just went up 40 percent, electricity 30-odd. To a person of relatively modest tastes, me for instance, the best lunch in London consists of oysters, Dover sole and a bottle of Chablis at one of the Wheeler restaurants; last week it cost £12 for two, which is an increase of 100 percent from two years ago.

On the other hand you can still hear the Festival Hall concerts for £2.75 (best seats)—the equivalent of $6.50. The best seats at the Aldwych, where the

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Royal Shakespeare Company has its London house, are a few pence less than that, and 50 or so other theaters, not counting innumerable club and fringe houses all over the place, cost the same or less. At this moment, if you are prepared to journey a few miles from the center, you can see Handke's *Kaspar* and Michael Frayn's *Alphabetical Order* in Hampstead, Jonathan Miller's peculiar *Importance of Being Earnest* at Greenwich, and, in a working-class theater converted from a ruined synagogue in Aldgate, Brian Phelan's potentially strong play about a run-in between an Irish *clochard* and a corrupt Chelsea police force. Nearer the great heart of the city an intelligent visitor would want to see everything in the repertoire of the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), and maybe 15 other plays. They would compete for his attention with a great many concerts, some say far too many, and, though the Turner smash-hit has ended, four or five exhibitions. If the weather is tough outside, it seems the band is still playing in the liner's lounge.

If, as seems plausible, there is nothing anybody can do about the storm, there is merit in attending to what seems wrong with the corrigible organization of the crew. I'm thinking of the campaign, energetic, efficient and sponsored by all the biggest stars, for the abolition of value added tax (VAT) on theater seats. Americans are innocent of VAT, and I, though forced to collect and transmit it, am the last person to explain it to them. It is charged, I gather, at each stage of the manufacture of a product, and the person who finally sells that product collects eight percent of its price from the purchaser and forwards it to H. M. Customs. For some reason theater seats and newspaper articles are regarded as products for this purpose, though books are not. VAT, one of the nastier consequences of going into Europe, is regarded by those who collect it as a perfectly splendid tax; it costs about two percent of the take to collect it, as against seven percent for the trickier kinds of income tax, where the intervention of highly educated inspectors is rightly regarded as essential. It is certainly here to stay. However the theater people want it taken off their seats; that eight percent is regarded as the last straw on the back of an ailing industry, many theaters will soon close if the campaign fails; and so the mighty were to be seen bearing placards in the Haymarket.

But VAT is by no means the only urgent problem. Much of the best in British theater is subsidized by the Arts Council, a body which extracts what it can from the Treasury, and hands it out as it thinks most just. At present it disposes of something like £22m. which doesn't seem bad in comparison with the £13m. on which we struggled along when I was a member of the council a couple of years back. But it is now regarded as so inadequate as to entail the almost instant demise of the entire British theater, music, painting and writing.

This point is made with almost hysterical plangency in a recent *Sunday Times* article by J. W. Lambert, who is not merely literary and arts editor of this, the largest of our Sunday papers, but a member of the council and for years its drama boss, controller of handouts to such institutional indispensables as the National, the Royal Shakespeare, the English Stage Company and all the provincial reps. Lambert's taste and opinions, and my taste and opinions, coincide with gratifying rarity, but neither of us wants the Old Vic to be turned into a bingo hall, and in this case he ought to know what he's talking about. He says, roughly and in part, that unless something drastic is done at once, such as an increase of the Council grant to £50m. "our flourishing post-war artistic renaissance" will cease.

The four subsidized opera companies (the Royal, at Covent Garden, the National at the Coliseum, the Welsh and Scottish Nationals) are already in a hopeless financial state. The National Theatre, whose grandiose new building on the south bank is creeping, with incredible slowness, toward completion, will not be able to occupy it. The RSC will have to give up the Aldwych and decline again into modest summer stock. In the commercial sector management will have to stop taking risks. The English Stage Company at the Royal Court, nursery of the modern English drama, will lose its freedom to experiment and fail. (It was on those hallowed boards that Olivier, 20 years ago, played Archie Rice in *The Entertainer* and advised the audience not to applaud too loudly: "It's a very old building." Now, to continue the symbolism, the roof is threatening to fall in. And across the river at the Old Vic they are playing *Heartbreak House*, which ends with similar premonitions of national catastrophe.) Outside London the position is, if possible, worse. And as for painters and poets, they will soon run out of studios and publishers.

There are naturally those who think Lambert is laying it on a bit thick, but few who would call this utter nonsense. So, before the waves surge into the Palm Court lounge, let me report briefly on the morale and performance of the orchestra. Next time I shall give more attention to writing, but here I concentrate on the performing arts, especially of course in London, for that is where most of the money is spent. First, opera: Covent Garden, with its almost year-round opera and ballet, is enormously expensive, and regularly absorbs 10 percent or so of the total amount available for subsidy; still, we are told, it costs less than any other major opera house. At the recent unsatisfactory *Traviata* with Joan Sutherland the stalls reached a new high of £9.50, which I make about $23; yet the price covers only about half of the true cost. Not surprisingly there is a good deal of animus against this metropolitan prodigality, especially in the provinces. "Can you have a capital city without a first-class opera-house?" cries one side. "Can

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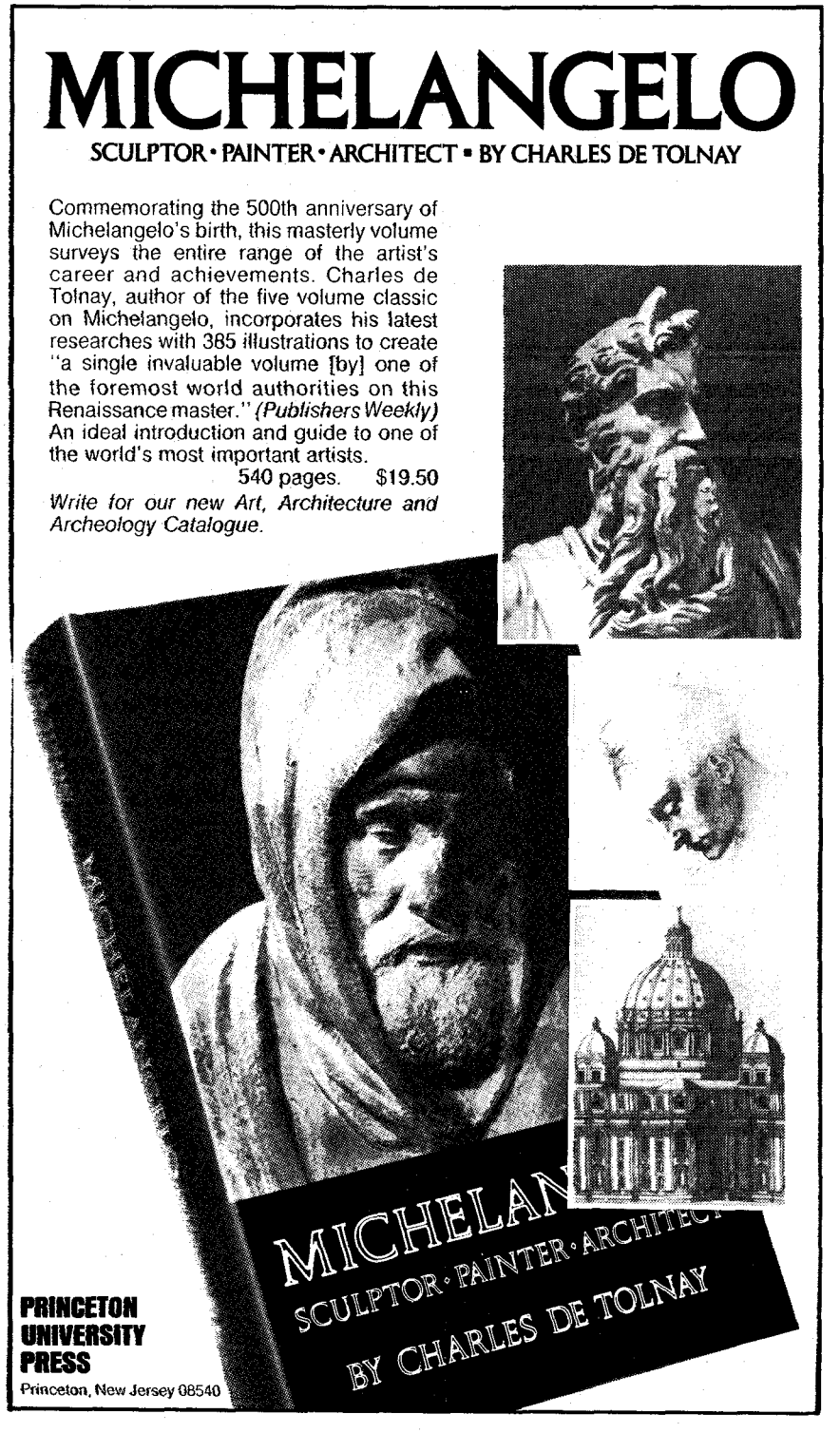
we afford it, especially as it's often well below standard?" asks the other. Pat on cue there appears in *The Times*, even as I write this piece, an interview with Sir Claus Moser, the new chairman of Covent Garden. He sounds reasonably cheerful, at any rate in comparison with the doom-laden news we hear of the Met, but forecasts few new productions, much less elaborate staging, orchestral economies and, high ambition, a wonderful new *Fledermaus*.

Fortunately we have the National Opera, until recently Sadler's Wells Opera. I agree, by and large, with Jack Richarson's assertion, in a recent *Commentary* article on the British invasion of Broadway, that whatever supremacy we have achieved is in quality of performance rather than of writing for the theater; and I would extend this to the performance of singers and operatic *metteurs-en-scène*, having chiefly in mind the present genuine splendors of the National Opera Company. It uses its own singers, not the jet-lagged stars, and it uses English texts. Just now it adorns practically everything it touches.

An American connoisseur, here recently on a brief visit, told me that the National's *Mastersingers* was certainly at this moment unmatchable anywhere in the world; he cancelled tickets at Covent Garden in order to see it again and again. The English-language *Ring*, built up with immense care over several years by Reginald Goodall, thought by some the best living Wagner conductor, has no close rival. There is a beautiful *Magic Flute*, some first-rate Janàček, a good *Comte Ory*, and nothing in the current repertoire that is far short of the best except perhaps an aging *Carmen*. The current showpiece is a *Rosenkavalier* equipped with *two* unexceptionable casts; the one I saw, with Lois McDonall as the Marschallin, Lyn Vernon as Oktavian and Norma Burrowes as Sophie, was enchanting proof against all the comparisons I could make, some of them pretty lofty. I have fond memories of the second-act set at the New York Met, though not of the now fading Visconti production at Covent Garden, and I thought the Coliseum sets a bit dull; but though one might long for other rooms one had no wish for other voices, or another orchestra, or another language. If the National Opera really is, as Lambert believes, about to wither on the branch, it is worth catching it at this moment of ripeness, and prospective American visitors should have it at the head of their list.

Others, it must be admitted, would give different advice. Bernard Crick, a professor of politics, has just been telling us that this is the golden age of the London theater, and that the RSC's current *Twelfth Night* proves it. This is a little excessive. The RSC has of course been very distinguished; most of the best players have worked for it, and so, in the past, has our best director, Peter Brook. The most eminent of our actresses, Peggy Ashcroft, continues to perform, and is highly placed in the company's counsels. The general standard of acting is very high.

Why, then, does one so often come away from Stratford, or the Aldwych, gloomy and discontented? I would defend the right of Joseph Papp and Charles Marowitz to do as they please with the Bard, but in what is virtually a state theater I think one ought occasionally to hear uncut texts well spoken. Wagner is not cut at Bayreuth. At Stratford even *Macbeth*, the shortest of the plays, is abridged, and some plays are virtually rewritten. And even when the production is months old the actors continue, to the disgrace of the director,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to speak lines in such a way as to make it evident that they do not understand them. This is a radical fault, worse even than some of the silly tarting up of the plays that has for years been the RSC's habit.

The silly *Cymbeline* of the last Stratford season (less absurd than *A Winter's Tale* and *Pericles* a few years back, but still enough to make one regret the trip to Stratford) gave me no appetite for *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth*, now showing in London, but a strict sense of duty beckoned me to the Aldwych. On my visit Nicol Williamson, the Malvolio, was sick, but had, as expected, a competent understudy. At the outset Orsino appeared to a group of young men who had already been lounging and strumming as we took our seats (as is now the vogue). "If music," he languorously announced, "be the food of love—" and then he rushed with extraordinary rapidity across the stage and panted, "play on." And it seemed we were in for another tiresomely camped-up *Twelfth Night*. But I must in honesty report that subsequently everything went well—that is we really were enabled to see that this is the greatest of English comedies, rather than that the RSC is always thinking and trying hard. The idle Orsino, sexually swinging both ways, Feste, presented as a hardbitten ballad singer, a battered Maria and (as is now the fashion) a rather depressed Sir Toby, somehow got the mood right. The Viola of Jane Lapotaire, always excepting her great solos, which suffered from the usual shyness or indifference to poetry, was perfect, so slender a girl-boy that her confrontation with her twin Sebastian was, as it rarely can be, the most beautiful of comic climaxes, sexual difference reduced to the merest looking-glass distortion. The quiet yet Saturnalian glow of the piece was sensibly there. It *could* have been better; but it was worthy a silver, if not a golden age of theater, and a strong hint that we should, as Lambert says, be mad to give it up.

Macbeth, much criticized at Stratford, arrives in London greatly chastened, speaking for itself, and played, quite rightly, without a break. It is a work with a tradition of ill luck in performance, and as its poetry is idiosyncratic and difficult as well as incomparable, there was no reason to expect this company to break the spell. Nicol Williamson is powerful and intelligent, but in his gruff guttural way can throw away pearls richer than all the tribe of actors and directors. Helen Mirren was stagily sexy, as if, someone said, she did her murderous persuading not in verse but offstage in bed. This is probably the best *Macbeth* since Olivier's at Stratford 20 years ago; but what is so odd is that it could easily have been improved. The undoubted strength and ingenuity of this company is qualified by a certain wilfulness. It must be improved as well as preserved.

The National has had its hard times, but at present is playing an excellent repertory to full houses at the Old Vic—as candles burn brightest before snuffing? Of *John Gabriel Borkman*, *Happy Days* and *Heartbreak House* I shall say a word next time; if, that is, we are still fiddling while the town succumbs to the economic fire. Is it conceivable that soon the theaters will be deserted, the restaurants empty, the bookstores holding disaster sales? No, it is not; but that does not mean it cannot happen.

Frank Kermode is Regius professor of English literature at Cambridge University, editor of Viking's Modern Masters series and author of *The Classic*, to be published by Viking this fall.

Brief But Not Slight

The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum by Heinrich Böll

(McGraw-Hill; $6.95)

Not enough, I think, has been said in praise of Heinrich Böll's craftsmanship. It may seem dull or even wrongheaded to praise a recipient of the Nobel prize in literature as a good writer, but more and more the award seems to be conferred for moral, rather than strictly literary reasons—as though it were a kind of spiritual beauty contest to be won on the basis of the high-minded sentiments expressed in the work of this novelist or that poet. (I could take the Nobel prize in literature a lot more seriously if the Swedish Academy had even once considered conferring it upon Louis-Ferdinand Destouches, the mean, misanthropic Vichy collaborator, who wrote so brilliantly, innovatively and influentially as Louis-Ferdinand Céline.)

Heinrich Böll—a Catholic man of conscience, a pacifist, a German of impeccable democratic credentials—received the Nobel award in 1972: his moral stature is beyond question. But he is also a fine and conscientious worker with words, a craftsman as careful in his own way as his father, who happened to be a cabinet maker, must have been in his. It is this, in a way, that assures Böll his important place in German literature. His first novel, *And Where Were You, Adam?*, was published in 1947. He began as a writer at a time when the German language was depleted and exhausted, if not quite dead, as George Steiner insisted in his notorious essay, "The Hollow Miracle." Böll contributed importantly to the regeneration of the language; he was one of the first to show that it could be made to work again and that it could work beautifully.

But just as important was *how* he did this, for he began in his early novels and stories very simply, naming specific things and describing fundamental feelings, as though validating the words one by one. He was a realistic novelist in a literature that had virtually ignored realism—as a style, as a convention, even as a basic means of coming to grips with experience. For the problem with the German novel has always been its august origins. It began, not as the English novel did as the somewhat scurrilous chronicle of contemporary lowlife (Defoe, Smollett and even Fielding fit here); but rather, in the hands of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, as a vehicle for philosophical speculation and discussion.

German novelists, well into the 20th century, never seemed to get their feet dirty. They dealt in abstractions, puzzles, vast moral questions, and vague religious matters—but seldom with the gritty dirt of everyday experience. Böll, however, came back from the war, his boots already caked with mud, ready to talk directly of the things he knew and saw about him. He took writers such as

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Hemingway and (I have always suspected) Graham Greene as his models and made a virtue of plain talk. Of all writers of Germany's postwar generation he is perhaps the least brilliant. But none has contributed more to the revival of literature there than he has in his workmanlike way.

With this long preamble, there is some danger that a short novel such as *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* (only 140 pages) may seem almost an afterthought, an addendum to a settled question. But no, because *Katharina Blum* is the sort of book that is brief without being slight. It exemplifies Böll's best qualities to a remarkable degree, reassuring us that, like the good craftsman he is, he works at one consistently high level, no matter what the length or shape he has chosen.

The shape, in this case, is fundamentally that of a thriller. Very early we are presented with the crime: a young woman has murdered a reporter in her apartment. What follows is an explanation of how Katharina Blum was brought to commit such an act—or, as the programmatic subtitle has it, *How Violence Develops and Where It Can Lead.* Having given the simple facts, Böll establishes that even in a thriller simple facts are never nearly enough. There are always extenuating circumstances and contingencies.

The extenuating circumstances are these: Katharina, a simple and decent young woman, has been victimized by the reporter, a writer for a publication very much like the *Bild-Zeitung* (the Picture Paper). We have no equivalent for the red-baiting, sensation-mongering *Bild-Zeitung* here in America—and a good thing, too. If you can imagine *The National Enquirer* as a daily with the largest circulation in the country, then you come close. The *Bild* is owned and run by Axel Springer; the young Leftists in Germany complain and demonstrate against it, decrying the tactics of the Springer press.

Katharina has become involved with a young bank robber who is apparently politically motivated—a radical. When she is brought in for questioning by the police, details of her interrogation are leaked to the press; transcripts of her subsequent telephone conversations are handed over. When the news reports appear, misinformation and half truths are cleverly woven so that whatever she is or has done is presented in a sinister light. She endures trial-by-publicity at its worst and most unfair. Finally she endures it no longer and reacting in a basic, human way, she destroys her tormentor.

There is, of course, a weighty moral question—one besides murder—at the heart of this. It lies in the precarious balance that exists in a free society between the rights of the individual to his privacy, and that of the press to provide information for the public. What is impressive is how well Heinrich Böll manages to contain and present the question within the limits of this short novel—one in the thriller format. Here the craftsman takes over and helps the Nobel laureate over the rough spots, giving us a kind of fact-by-fact, interrogation-by-interrogation exposition, almost in the style of *Report to the Commissioner.* But it is all directed toward the larger question of the rights of the press versus the rights of the individual. It projects the problem, giving it substance and reality, as no mere discussion-in-dialogue could ever do.

Bruce Cook

Bruce Cook is a film and music critic for *The National Observer.*

The African Writer

by Charles R. Larson

Sadly, in recent writing from Africa, the prison has become a metaphor for the modern African state. Dennis Brutus' poems, *A Simple Lust* (Hill and Wang, 1973), and D. M. Zwelonke's novel, *Robben Island* (Humanities Press, 1973), recorded the horrors of incarceration in the prisons of South Africa, though prison literature by nonwhite South Africans is anything but new. Eight years ago, when Alex La Guma published his novel *The Stone Country* (Seven Seas Books, Berlin, 1967), the work contained the following dedication: "to the daily average of 70,351 prisoners in South African gaols in 1964." Like so many other nonwhite South African writers, La Guma has spent his share of time in the country's prisons. One almost expects to see South Africa's nonwhite writers routinely treated in this manner—for their political beliefs, they are thrown into jail, and after their release or escape their writings, which reflect on these prison experiences are banned by the government. Not surprisingly, La Guma's latest novel, *In the Fog of the Season's End* (The Third Press, 1973) returns to the subject of South Africa's prisons and the torture that goes on within them. (La Guma lives in exile in England.)

A much greater surprise occurred last year when the South African government for the first time banned a novel by an Afrikaans writer—André Brink's *Kennis van die Aand* (recently published in an English version by W. H. Allen in London: *Looking on Darkness*), the story of a Coloured actor awaiting execution for breaking the Immorality Act (which prohibits sexual relations between whites and nonwhites) by carrying on a lengthy affair with an English woman. What shocked the censors was not so much the novel's descriptions of the sexual activities between a Coloured man and a white woman, but Brink's lengthy descriptions of torture in South African prisons. The banning of the novel, then, was not an unpredictable event. For several years the South African government has fought a losing battle with journalists and writers who have dared to expose the country's infamous prison system. Political torture and censorship apparently go hand in hand.

That is not, however, what one would expect from the areas of the continent where self-rule is a historical reality. Readers of Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died* (Harper & Row, 1973) were appalled when they read the talented Nigerian's account of his 27-month imprisonment during the Nigerian Civil War. Here was a black African government practicing the same politics of preventive detention (no charges, no trial) that the South African government had practiced for years with its so-called black revolutionaries. Soyinka, a Yoruba, and technically on the winning side, was placed in solitary confinement all those months during the war simply to silence him. The Nigerian authorities realized that as one of Africa's leading intellectuals Soyinka was not going to

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stand there silently and watch his country being ravaged by a senseless war. So they muzzled him, and Soyinka retaliated (after he was released) by publishing one of the most revealing documents of prison life ever written—a journal he had written surreptitiously between the lines of a Thomas Mann novel. (Since the publication of *The Man Died*, Soyinka has lived in exile, and the book, of course, has not been available in Nigeria.)

The most recent example of prison literature from still another African country is Legson Kayira's fourth novel, *The Detainee* (published in England by Heinemann Educational Books). Kayira, a Malawian, gained a certain amount of fame for himself 15 years ago when he walked halfway across the African continent, attempting to achieve his goal of obtaining an American education (later begun at Skagit Valley Jr. College in Washington). After the publication of the work that described his early life in Malawi and his education in the United States, *I Will Try* (Doubleday, 1965), Kayira continued his graduate studies at Cambridge, writing novels in his spare time. These works have been banned in his own country, because Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda, the president, has not been pleased with Kayira's criticisms of Malawian politics. (Kayira remains in England in voluntary exile.)

The Detainee is an obvious attack at Dr. Banda's leadership (the cult of the president for life) as well as the repressive government that now controls the nation. In deliberately flat prose, Kayira has related the story of an old man's detention at the hands of the Young Brigades who terrorize the country with the blessing of their president, a dictator called Sir Zaddock or His Rightful Highness. The narrative itself is sparse, uncomplicated: Napolo's uncompleted trek to the capital for medical care; his harassment and detention by the Young Brigades; his accidental escape from his confiners the night he is supposed to be executed.

Woven into this simple tale of legitimized evil is a Kafkaesque story of life in a contemporary African state where individual rights have ceased to exist, where teenage thugs beat up and murder helpless old men and women who refuse to answer their every beck and call, where any citizen who refuses to join the country's singular political party is a fugitive from justice. The prison metaphor extends far beyond the confines of the detention camps themselves—it embraces the entire country—and this is why Kayira's novel is in many ways the most upsetting of all these recent works.

The political parallels of the *The Detainee* are transparent to anyone familiar with life in Malawi today. Sir Zaddock shares a number of obvious similarities with Dr. Banda—the president's supposed magical qualities (bullets can't harm him); his scientific and technical achievements (roads and bridges in the country were built by Sir Zaddock himself. As one of his followers says, "Nothing is impossible with Sir Zaddock. . . . He's more than a magician. If he can create a flower what's there to stop him from creating a person?" The Young Brigades (Banda's Youth Corps) are depicted as superstitious, gullible and sadistic teenagers—like Hitler's young Nazis, simply following orders from above. One of the more humane youths tells Napolo,

> *The fact is, my good friend, that detaining people is something over which I have no control whatsoever. All decisions affecting detainees are made by others, elsewhere. I've to implement them here because that's what I'm paid for. I initiate nothing and I'm not even allowed to make any recommendations. Like the detainees themselves I only obey orders, except that mine emanate from the highest authority in the land.*

An elaborate network of detention camps has been set up across the country. Camps are planned for schoolchildren who do not share Sir Zaddock's views. A recurring theme is the irony of independence and the erosion of civil rights that has continued unchecked since the British left. One of Napolo's friends comments, "Do you realize that there has been a state of emergency here since the white man left?"

By the time he reaches the end of Kayira's political parable, the reader has the sickening feeling of *déjà vu*. Kayira's novel has risen from the ashes of the holocaustal literature of World War II: André Schwarz-Bart's *The Last of the Just*, Arnost Lustig's *A Prayer for Katrina Horovitzova*. I am afraid, however, that the floodgates have only begun to open up to the flow of prison literature from Africa—not just by writers from the countries where we might expect this (South Africa, Rhodesia and the Portuguese colonies) but from those so-called independent nations (Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda, Guinea) where "madmen and specialists" (Wole Soyinka's terms for his own country's leaders) have systematically eliminated any vocal minority critical of the powers that be.

Under conditions such as these, the African writer's situation has become more precarious than at any other time since independence. Many of the continent's leading writers have in fact fled into exile either because they have already witnessed incidents similar to those described in Kayira's novel or because they are afraid that similar events are in store for them. Besides the writers mentioned here, several other leading African authors (and many minor ones) are currently living in exile: Chinua Achebe, Camara Laye, Ezekiel Mphahlele. The most famous of these, Nigerian Chinua Achebe, who has taught at the University of Massachusetts for the last three years, stated in a recent interview that he will wait in exile "until a civilian government takes over from the military." Camara Laye was forced to flee from Guinea nine years ago when he published his last work, *A Dream of Africa* (Collier Books, 1971). Since then he has lived in Senegal working on a novel called *The Exiles*, worrying about his wife, a political prisoner in Guinea. The title of South African writer Ezekiel Mphahlele's last novel (*The Wanderers*, Macmillan, 1971)

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has become emblematic of the African writer's fate in general. As a leading Sierra Leonean poet told me, "I foresee the day when all African writers will be living in exile—in Europe and the United States." The alternatives are equally upsetting.

Charles R. Larson is the author of *The Emergence of African Fiction* (Indiana University Press).

New Argument

Anarchy, State and Utopia by Robert Nozick

(Basic Books; $12.95)

The great Ludwig Wittgenstein has advised us that there are certain "things" (as opposed to "facts") about which we cannot *meaningfully* speak. Anything that is thinkable can be the subject of theoretical discussion; but a thought must be expressed by language that is limited in the sense that it can only express that which is logically real. "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world," Wittgenstein explained. One can deal with something specific, like the meaning of "green," but one cannot deal with things that are unprovable and problematic—that is, things that are metaphysical—because such things cannot be put into words. Said Wittgenstein: "Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must remain silent."

Wittgenstein's rigorous narrowness seemed to personify, for me at least, the sterile and irrelevant nature of 20th-century philosophy; however, he was fully cognizant of his philosophy's shortcomings. The things about which we cannot meaningfully speak, but which nonetheless exist as genuine intellectual problems, are, he later confessed, the only things worth speaking about. Unlike the meaning of the term "green" these things may be subject to disputation, which is why they are so important. Wittgenstein, unfortunately, never got around to speaking systematically about these things himself. Had he done so contemporary philosophy might be a richer and more exciting subject than it is today.

Wittgenstein to the contrary, philosophy ought to concern itself with more significant ventures than teaching the fly the way out of the wretched fly-bottle. The important questions that once fascinated professional philosophers, have in our time been left to others—to journalists, historians, political scientists, economists and theologians. But it would seem that there are at least a few contemporary philosophers willing to address themselves to the big questions about which we are supposed to remain silent. Leszek Kolakowski and Stuart Hampshire have aimed at subjects that most contemporary philosophers shy away from. In America John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* inaugurated a debate that succeeded in stimulating the intellectual community.

Now Rawls has been joined in the business of pumping fresh life back into the philosophy profession by his Harvard colleague Robert Nozick, whose *Anarchy, State and Utopia* is a perfect example of how philosophy should be written. It is the kind of book that, I imagine, Wittgenstein would have found to be both unrewarding and devoid of meaning, but which the uncontaminated layman will find both meaningful and rewarding. Like Rawls' *Theory of Justice*, Nozick's intellectually daring and politically significant treatise is very much a reflection of the *weltanschauung*. Politically his analysis is a response to the dogmatic assumptions of ritualistic liberalism. Intellectually, it is, at least in part, a reaction to John Rawls' apologia for those assumptions. Rawls' theory of justice is instrumentally consanguineous with the ideological line of the Democratic party in America, while Nozick's counter-theory of justice owes its inspiration to the classical liberal political and economic theorists of the 19th century.

There is something of the social Darwinist in Nozick, and one cannot fail to notice the specter of Herbert Spencer's *Man Versus the State* in his pages. This is not surprising since Spencer was one of the last serious philosophers to address himself to the issues of liberty and individualism. In our time these issues have been abandoned by the philosophers, who willingly consigned them to the scrutiny of the economics profession. Therefore instead of turning to professional philosophers to buttress his case, Nozick turns, more often than not, to the work of such libertarian economists as Ludwig von Mises, Murray Rothbard and Friedrich Hayek.

Nozick's case is not a new one, although his argument for it is. One need only turn to John Locke's *Second Treatise on Civil Government* for a classic exposition of the libertarian case. "Freedom of men under government," Locke argued, "is to have a standing rule to live by, common to every one of that society, and made by the legislative power erected in it; a liberty to follow my own will in all things, where that rule prescribes not: and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, arbitrary will of another man." It is not the function of the state to restrain freedom. Rather, the state ought to concern itself with the expansion and preservation of freedom. Freedom, Locke argued, is not a "liberty for every man to do what he lists," for that would destroy freedom by, for example, allowing the strong to dominate the weak, and deprive them of their freedom. This is why Locke rejected anarchy. Freedom is, or ought to be, a condition that enables man "to dispose and order as he lists, his person, actions, possessions, and his whole property, within the allowance of those laws under which he is, and therein not to be the subject of the arbitrary will of another, but freely follow his own."

That, sans the Lockean social contract, is basically the position Nozick sets out to defend. Unlike most 20th-century libertarians—including the free-market economists he regularly mines for

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examples—he has not written a libertarian credo. His purpose is analytical, and his libertarianism is the result of his analysis and not the received opinion that has inspired his fellows. The modern progressive will, needless to say, be unhappy with Nozick's conclusions, which are antithetic to the most fundamental beliefs of the progressive mind. Not since the publication of Hayek's *Constitution of Liberty* has the libertarian case against statism been so masterfully presented. In instrumentalist terms, Nozick has challenged the votaries of social democracy to confront his arguments and restate their case anent those arguments instead of assuming their statist views of freedom, individualism and social justice to be the only truths in contemporary political life. I suspect that Nozick's book, coming as it does after a period of vigorous revitalization on the part of libertarian social scientists such as Milton Friedman, will force public policy-conscious Americans to do a good deal of rethinking.

Nozick begins his analysis in the Lockean "state of nature," where the state begins. Like Locke, he rejects anarchy and argues for a minimal state, the "night-watchman" state of classical liberal theory, which is limited to the functions of protecting all its citizens against violence, theft, fraud and breach of contract. Such a state, whatever its deficiencies, he argues, is the most extensive state that can be tolerated. One cannot expand the powers of the minimal state even minutely without violating the rights of individuals. Here Nozick is on stronger theoretical ground than Locke, since Locke's social contract would allow an expansion of state powers, while Nozick's state (which, in fact, is more of a free market than a state) is inextricably linked to market forces from which it cannot escape without violating its ethos. The minimal state is not for Nozick a good thing in itself; it is simply utilitarian and preferable to anarchy.

The core of Nozick's book is his critique of the progressive theory of justice. That theory is predicated on the idea of equality of results (as opposed to equality of opportunity). The conflict between equality of results and equality of opportunity is one of the central moral problems confronting the democratic world today. Nozick is at his weakest when he endeavors to deal with the morality of this conflict. Indeed libertarianism in general has never satisfactorily been able to deal with this problem, which William Graham Sumner described as "the bum-in-the-gutter problem." "The best place for the bum," Sumner wrote, "is in the gutter, where nature can go about its business." In a certain sense all extreme libertarians are social Darwinists—including libertarians such as Nozick, who have shed the simplistic positivism that plagued Sumner. If one takes the bum out of the gutter, one in effect allows for the survival of the unfit at the expense of the fit who deserve to survive. Sumner tried to get around this problem by propounding what he called the "ethics of responsibility," which would, in effect, leave the bum's fate to the caprice of individuals. An individual can, if he chooses, take the bum out of the gutter, as long as he does it of his own free will, and as long as the state st. ys out of the decision. However the more extreme wing of libertarianism believes, with Ayn Rand, in the "virtues of selfishness," and would gladly leave the bum in the gutter in the interest of individualism. Nozick, I hasten to add, would, like Sumner, have no objection to a private citizen taking the bum out of the gutter.

The libertarian has traditionally viewed the motives of the egalitarian with suspicion, and Nozick is no exception. To some libertarians the passion for equality is viewed as a form of social envy. They would exchange the doctrine of "to each according to his needs"—which they view as a coercive concept—for the doctrine of "to each according to his willingness to put his abilities to work." The Calvinist implications of this view are apparent; it is difficult to escape the fact that most libertarians think of themselves as members of a kind of secularized elect. But Nozick does not get deeply involved in these aspects of the argument. His case against what he calls "patterned" or equal distribution of wealth is based on his belief in the primacy of liberty. Like the 19th-century American politician John Randolph of Roanoke, he seems to be saying, "I love liberty, I hate equality." One cannot sacrifice liberty in order to achieve equality, one cannot take one man's goods (assuming he has come by them honestly) and give them to another man in the name of a just and equal society. By the same token a man ought to be free to dispose of his goods or holdings in any way he chooses, provided that he does so legally and does not hinder any man's freedom.

The reader who is in sympathy with the redistributionist views of modern social democracy will, I think, be shaken by many of Nozick's arguments against those views. John Rawls' apodictic conclusions will appear to be less firmly established to anyone who bothers to read Nozick. The theory of social justice that has held sway in America for many years now will begin to appear less clearly just. Americans are addicted to the idea of freedom, even if—as the libertarians argue—they only give lip-service to the practice of freedom. Those who disagree with Nozick will nonetheless find it difficult to argue against him. "Individuals have rights," he says, "and there are things no person or group may do to them [without violating their rights]." Many of the advocates of redistributionist social justice will have never heard the case against them put quite that way before.

There is much more to Nozick's book. His powers of argument are profound, and his insights are at times staggering in their brilliance. There are holes in some of his arguments—especially when he prescribes the conditions under which he would allow for his minimal state to interfere in the actions of individuals—but Nozick does not pretend that he has covered all the ground of his case. In many ways readers will find this book unrelated to the real world. Political conservatives will derive little solace from his conclusions, and will find more ammunition in the humane and empirical studies of economists such as Hayek and Friedman (both of whom are authoritarian by Nozick's standards). But these latter objections have nothing to do with Nozick's philosophical purpose, which will be best served by the intellectual discussion his book will engender. "Nothing," wrote Tocqueville, "is more fertile in prodigies than the art of being free; but there is nothing more arduous than the apprenticeship of liberty." This arduous apprenticeship is what Nozick is all about.

Peter P. Witonski

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Universal Hug

A Time for Angels by Elmer Bendiner

(Knopf; $12.98)

Any new book on the history of the League of Nations is to be welcomed in an age when the necessity for institutionalized and long-term interstate cooperation on economic and political issues is so urgent and yet when domestic pressures on government to consider only national and short-term interests are so strong. In what circumstances will nations work together harmoniously and constructively, and what degree of control over, say, arms levels and tariffs are they willing to relinquish to an international body? This book does not pose or set out to answer theoretical questions of this kind, but in his account of the establishment and working of the first worldwide international organization, the author opens a mine of information on the problems encountered in this great experiment, and the ways in which they were faced or funked.

The book is entertaining as well as informative. The author's prose is witty, with well-turned epithets and apt and amusing quotations. Thus he describes the Kellogg Briand Pact of 1928, calling on nations to renounce war as an instrument of national policy, as "a declaration as unobjectionable as a Boy Scout oath and probably as effective." He remarks that the British government's decision to counter German threats in 1934 by supporting and strengthening the machinery of the League "had an air of unconscious absurdity like a solemn vow of sexual fidelity on one's golden wedding anniversary." Mussolini is described as a "remarkable mine sweeper" for Hitler, "demonstrating that the road of aggression was quite safe." Twenty years of continually frustrated attempts to come to a collective agreement on levels of armaments as between geographically disparate countries with different historical experiences and traditions is vividly summed up by the Spaniard Salvador de Madariaga, one-time member of the League Secretariat, in a brilliant animal parable: "The lion, looking sideways at the eagle, said, 'Wings must be abolished.' The eagle, looking at the bull, declared, 'Horns must be abolished.' The bull, looking at the tiger, said 'Paws, and especially claws, must be abolished.' The bear, in his turn, said, 'All arms must be abolished; all that is necessary is a universal embrace.'"

There is no lack of color and vivid detail in this book. What is missing is some solid, systematic analysis of the League's machinery and of the successive crises with which it had to deal. Over one-third of the book is devoted to the Paris Peace Conference and to the drafting of the League Covenant, and yet we are not told what the principal ideas embodied in the covenant were, or from whence they came. Nor are we told what the founder members of the League thought of the finished product to which Woodrow Wilson forced them to subscribe, and of its various "avenues of escape" from war.

From an investigation into British government cabinet and foreign office files of the time, it is clear that the British government approved of some articles in the covenant, such as articles 12 to 17 dealing with the peaceful settlement of disputes (though there was some doubt about the efficacy of economic and particularly military sanctions) and article 19 outlining the possibility of revision of treaties, but were bitterly opposed to the inclusion of others, in particular the mutual guarantee scheme outlined in article 10 on which Wilson laid such emphasis. In striking contrast the French government was implacably hostile to notions of periodic revision of settlements and treaties, and looked to article 10 to save them from renewed German aggression. Article 10 was also supported vigorously by other countries who had done well out of the 1919 peace treaties, such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia, and who wanted to render inoperable any schemes for treaty revision.

Over disarmament, too, there was division between the British who wanted to use the new league to bring about low levels of national armament and thus cut defense expenditure, and the French and their east European allies who wanted Germany disarmed and themselves militarily prepared not only against future German threats but against the Bolshevik menace. Naturally these divisions were deepened by the refusal of the United States to join the League, and the result was that in many crucial areas the machinery of the League was deadlocked. Whether American membership in the League would have made it a more effective organization, and if so, in which respects, Bendiner neglects to tell us.

He also ignores or summarily dismisses some important issues with which the League had to deal, such as the Corfu crisis, the Draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee and the Mosul dispute. In addition there are some serious errors of fact and some misleading half-truths. The Smuts pamphlet of 1918, *The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion*, did not include a proposal for converting the enemy's colonies into trust territories; it proposed that politically advanced nations should give a helping hand to the new states of eastern Europe that were emerging into the hostile world of the 20th century. Smuts specifically stated that this idea could not work in colonial areas such as German Southwest Africa where the native inhabitants were in a backward state, but Woodrow Wilson seized onto it to solve the problem of what to do about Germany's former colonies. These had been taken during the war by British, Belgian, French, Dominion and Japanese troops, and the latter two were particularly keen to hang on to their war spoils. But no, insisted President Wilson,

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this was a new age that could not be defiled by annexations or occupations. As a compromise three classes of mandate were devised to satisfy both Wilson and the Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans and Japanese. But we are not told anything about this fascinating struggle.

It is not true to say that "under the peace treaties the League was charged with protecting minorities from overweening majorities in all the countries of the world." Minority provisions only covered the newly emergent east European states, a fact of which they were bitterly conscious. Joseph Chamberlain was never British Foreign Secretary, and the Washington naval conference of 1921-22 did not put Britain and the United States on a par in naval stength in general, but only in battleships. Cruisers were left aside, to be considered and fought about later. And the League Covenant was not incorporated as article one of the Treaty of Versailles, but constituted its first 26 articles.

Despite such errors, the book will furnish many hours of fascinating reading for the general reader, and will offer him innumerable insights into the problems posed by overweening national susceptibilities and the great possibilities inherent in schemes of international cooperation.

Ruth B. Henig

Ruth B. Henig is lecturer in history at the University of Lancaster and editor of *The League of Nations* in the Barnes & Noble *Evidence and Commentary* series.

American Lives

Trying Out the Dream by Paul Wilkes

(Lippincott; $9.95)

Paul Wilkes is rapidly becoming well known as a writer in a genre of our time: the experience lived for the sake of the book to come. The form has enjoyed a certain upward mobility, having moved through series like the *Ladies' Home Journal's* "How America Lives" and "Can This Marriage be Saved?" to the hardcover book world and then to the attention of a new readership. It appeases our apparently limitless appetite for information and at the same time satisfies the hidden voyeur in each of us. It results in a hybrid work bred of journalism and sociology and requires certain talents: a talent for analysis of data, no matter how superficial; the ability to transliterate the conversations of ordinary day-by-day intercourse and interviews so that they become readable conversations (the literary use of a tape recorder is an art in itself as the work of Studs Terkel bears witness); and the ability to impose form on raw hunks and chunks of experience.

Wilkes has moved rapidly as a master of the genre. This book is much superior to *Why These Priests Stay*, his book of 1974. It is as engaging, and has the strong narrative interest of the best magazine fiction. Herbert J. Gans, professor of sociology at Columbia, has given it high praise saying that it combines empirical accuracy of research with the emotional force of a novel. With a few caveats, I must agree.

The basic idea is a good one, and one to be applauded. Wilkes felt that it would be interesting and "possibly educational" to follow an average American family for a year and then report on it. The people we know in headlines or on television cameras are not real people like us. He says: "they are too rich or poor, too powerful or disenfranchised, perhaps too eccentric or publicity conscious." He did not feel that any one family could give us a distillation of American experience, but that watching such a family might make it possible for us to understand how other ordinary people try to make sense out of their lives. "Perhaps we can learn something from people who are neither more nor less than we are."

So he set about finding a family that conformed in membership at least with the average American family as depicted by the United States Census Bureau. Such an average family has a father who is a middle-echelon manager and a mother who is primarily a homemaker although she has occasional part-time

The Martyrdoms

(Certain Old Paintings)

The point is, the executioner is curt
Never ferocious
You, and on to the next
I have to be home at eleven
My wife is waiting

Hold still, the skin on this side
Doesn't come off as easy
You should have seen Lawrence
The night we turned him to toast

I wonder what songs they were singing
The day they carried Catherine off to the wheel
Probably songs of cheer and not of derision
Probably nothing they wouldn't have sung at a feast

When the knifepoint broke on the rib
He handed it down to George
His assistant, who handed him back
The one he'd been sharpening
Dreaming in secret of dragons

Watch carefully, George
You have to be neat at a flaying
He held up a crimson strip to the lantern
The light shone through

Drew McCord Stroud

Drew McCord Stroud currently manages a small chamber orchestra in New York City.

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work. They are in their early 40s and have 2.4 children, teenagers. They live in a suburban area, and like most suburbanites have migrated from a city.

He found such a family in the Neumeyers—Art, Betty and their three children: Martha in college, Richard a college dropout and Joan still in junior high school. Active in th Methodist church, the mother has been a Camp Fire leader and the father a coach in Little League. Art is foreman and part-time salesman in a die-cutting factory; Betty sometimes helps a caterer with big parties.

The relationship of the Neumeyers to the American dream—the extent to which they embody it—is skillfully sketched by the author.

Art and Betty have come a long way from their humble beginnings. Art, who spent nine years in an orphanage, and Betty, whose parents ran a series of fruit markets that eventually went under, could easily be considered a couple that has modestly fulfilled the American Dream. They are well thought of in their community, and when their old friends from the city come to visit them, they come away impressed that Betty and Art have provided their children with a clean, safe place to live, good educations and material comforts. To people of their upbringing, how well parents take care of their children, and, in turn, how well those children produce in society are the criteria by which the parents are judged. For Art, who left school after the tenth grade, it is quite an accomplishment to have worked himself into management. . . . for him and Betty, who was not encouraged to go beyond high school, to have a child in college and heading for a degree is even more important. Conversely, having a son in a menial factory job is an embarrassment.

The outcome of their children's lives is crucial to Art and Betty because their married life has been centered around them. . . .

Paul Wilkes spent a year studying the Neumeyers, living with them a good part of the time. He went to work and bowling with Art, rode around at night with Richard and his friends, observed Joan at school, went to college with Martha and spent long hours in the house with Betty. He gathered over 4000 pages of transcribed interviews from tapes. It is a tribute to his writing skill that the Neumeyers seem so interesting; his selection of passages from the interviews to add to and illuminate scenes from their family life is especially good. But one has to ask whether there has not been some fictionalizing: how could even the most competent observer know the mental soliloquies of family members or what Art and Betty talked about in bed at night?

Interestingly enough, Wilkes seems to have gotten along with, and understood best, Betty the mother and Martha, who is in college. He says of Betty:

I think it is more significant that Betty is, plain and simple, underutilized. She is an intelligent woman who has too much time on her hands to do too few things. She is therefore a compulsive overorganizer and she also has a need for her efforts to be rewarded immediately. After all, she has thought a lot about what she's giving and has invested so much in seemingly small situations that when they don't pay off she feels slighted.

He sees Martha, for all her conflict with her parents about racial attitudes, the war in Vietnam, life-styles and hypocrisy in the church, is basically as conventional as they. Perhaps it is because he is, as he describes himself, basically urban that he finds underachiever Richard's nightly floating, aimless from bar to bar and his preoccupation with "wheels" a strange phenomenon. To me it seems fairly typical behavior of the lower middle class suburban youth in our culture.

In the end both reader and author can conclude that the Neumeyers are coping very well despite the titillating assertion on the book jacket: "Beneath the ostensibly placid surface of their daily lives is smoldering tension that outsiders, including their friends, rarely glimpse." Comparison with the Louds of the televised "An American Family" series is inevitable, for both families shared the pathetic willingness to give up their privacy in gratitude for being found interesting—certainly a commentary on our times. But the Louds were in trouble; the Neumeyers, although suffering inevitable strains, do not seem to be. They have shared goals, community relationships and a basic affection for each other to see them through. Theirs is not a dramatic story, but a very human one.

Abigail McCarthy

Abigail McCarthy, a free-lance writer and critic, is the author of *Private Faces, Public Places* (Doubleday).

Kauffmann, *from page 18*

Godard, we can see now, was the man for college students of the '60s. (College students today are notably less interested.) Ken Russell seems to be the man for high school students of the '70s. His style is ultra-cinematic in the least demanding way—it can be called the TV commercial in excelsis, all split screens and star bursts and swiftly changing colors and anything else that's handy, all the time. For the adolescent, both young and old, who thinks that filmmaking virtuosity is all of filmmaking, he is ideal. His grotesqueries with the life of Tschaikowsky and with John Whiting's play *The Devils* were reticence itself compared with *Tommy*. This was a record album, a rock opera written by Peter Townshend for The Who, which Russell has called "the greatest art work of the twentieth century." For this high school judgment his film is the perfect cinematic equivalent.

There is no speech. For almost two hours, nothing but song and music. The story is about Tommy (Roger Daltrey), the child of an RAF pilot killed in the war before he is born, who accidentally discovers his mother in bed with the man who becomes her second husband, who is shocked into muteness, blindness and deafness, and who finally comes out of it, when grown up, via music. (Mostly loud.) Tommy then becomes a quasi-Christ figure. Glib religiosity seems inseparable from rock.

The costumes by Shirley Russell and the sets by Paul Dufficey are good show biz. The cinematographers, Dick Bush and Ronnie Taylor, have to breathe hard to keep up with everything, but they do. I liked one sequence. No, not Marilyn Monroe as a secular parody of the Virgin of Lourdes, which was senior-class-show brilliance at its dampest, but one with Ann-Margret, who sings and dances and strenuously acts as Tommy's mother. In her fluffy boudoir she watches TV, including commercials. Then (with Russell revealing more than he perhaps knows) she has a fantasy in which the beans and chocolate syrup of the commercials pour out into her all-white chamber and nearly drown her. The flood stops just short of the camera and the director behind it, alas.

NEXT WEEK

Stanley Kauffmann reviews
The Maids

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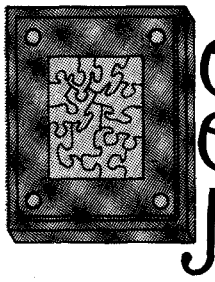

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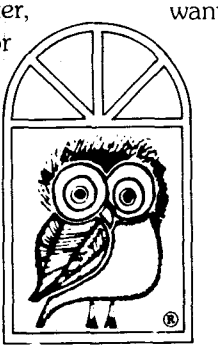

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